

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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No. 128.

NEW YORK, JULY 5, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

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THE GANG OF BLACK BAR.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.



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Harry covered Clarke with his revolver.

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NEW YORK, JULY 5, 1901.

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The Bradys and Bad Man Smith:

OR,

THE GANG OF BLACK BAR.

A DETECTIVE STORY OF THE MINES.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CASE OUT WEST.

"Well, gentlemen," said the Chief of the Secret Service, "I have a case in the Wild West for you."

"Ah!" said Old King Brady, with his grim, inscrutable smile; "that will be a bit of a change."

"Sure!" cried Harry Brady, his young partner and protege. "We have been working around New York for quite a while, now."

"Then you like the idea?" asked the chief.

"Oh, yes, indeed," agreed the two detectives. "What is the case?"

"Read this telegram and you may be able to understand all," said the chief. "I think it explains itself."

He placed a lengthy telegram in Old King Brady's hands. The two detectives glanced over it.

It was dated at Black Bar, Colorado, and read as follows:

"To the Chief of the Secret Service,

"New York City.

"Dear Sir—We, the citizens of Black Bar, have as-

sembled to take action against the gang of desperadoes who are trying to run this town. They are making things miserable for the honest miners out here, and Bad Man Smith is the head and front of all the trouble. We want you to send us some detectives smart enough to get evidence against Smith, and we will do the rest. We have twenty thousand dollars in dust subscribed, and we mean business. Send us the best detectives you have got. Our blood is up, and we don't propose to stop at anything. Bad Man Smith must go. Be sure and send us a good man.

"Yours truly,

"The Committee of Safety,

"Black Bar, Colorado."

The two detectives, it is hardly necessary to say, read this with deep interest.

There was an interval of silence.

Then the chief said:

"Well, gentlemen, what do you think of it?"

"Humph!" said Old King Brady. "There is rough work in it."

"You are equal to it."

"At least we can try it," said the old detective. "Eh, Harry?"

"Well, you bet," said the young detective. "I shall just dote on it. What a chance for sport!"

"They are a dead-shot gang out there," said the chief. "You'll have to carry something on your hip all the time."

This did not phase the Bradys.

They were dead shots themselves, with any kind of firearms. The prospect rather pleased them.

"It's settled," said Old King Brady. "Wire them that we will be on hand."

"Good!" cried the chief. "I wish you luck."

So a telegram was sent to the Black Bar Committee that two Secret Service men would start at once for Colorado.

Then the Bradys went to their lodgings to prepare for their trip.

These two famous detectives were known the world over.

Old King Brady had for years haunted the slums of New York, and was the terror of the evildoer.

Harry Brady, though of the same name, was no blood relation. He was a warm friend, and, in fact, a pupil of the old sleuth's.

He was scarcely inferior to him in detective craft. As a team the two could not be beaten.

The Bradys prepared for a rough life in the Wild West. They knew that the garments of civilization would hardly do out there.

So they equipped themselves with frontier suits of rough jeans and red-flannel shirts, such as are worn by miners.

Also they placed some firearms in their trunks.

"We will not don this sort of garb until we get to Denver," said Old King Brady. "Then we shall be prepared for business."

"That is right," agreed Harry. "I feel as though we were out for hot work."

"I have heard of this Bad Man Smith. He was the bad man of Dawson for a while."

"Yes?"

"He is a quick shot, and a bully of the worst kind. But I think we can handle him."

"We will try!"

Just then there came a rap on the door.

"Come in!" cried Old King Brady.

The door opened and a messenger entered.

"Message for James Brady," he said.

"That's me," said Old King Brady. He took the letter.

"It's from the chief," he said, glancing at the superscription. Harry was interested.

"What's wrong now?"

"We shall see!"

Old King Brady broke the seal and read:

"To the Bradys—Have just received a message from Dan Dixey of Denver, asking you to call for him at Mike Moran's hotel, in that city. He is the Chairman of the Black Bar Committee of Safety. Yours,

"The Chief."

Old King Brady placed the letter in his pocket.

"No answer!" he said to the messenger. Then the boy went out. The two detectives looked at each other.

"I don't like that idea," said Old King Brady. "Why should we be met in Denver?"

"Does it suggest to you a possible sharp game of the gang?"

"It does!"

"We will be on our guard."

"That we will. However, it may be all right, and I may be wrong. But I think it will be well to be very careful."

It was not long now before the detectives were ready.

They took a small trunk, which contained their outfit, and which they were to leave in Denver.

The train for the West left the Grand Central Depot an hour later. The detectives proceeded thither leisurely.

They secured a stateroom in a through car to Denver, and made themselves comfortable.

The train left on time, and soon they were bowling away across the State of New York, on their way to Chicago.

The next night they rolled into that city.

Here their car was coupled to a fast Rocky Mountain express. The detectives noted a well-dressed man get aboard.

He wore a light overcoat and a silk hat. He was plainly a man accustomed to affluence.

"My name is Hunter Williams," they heard him say to the Pullman car conductor. "I want a lower berth."

"All right, sir. Going through to Denver?"

"Yes."

"Here is your berth check, sir."

"Thank you! Look here, conductor; do you know anything about Denver?"

"That is my native place."

"Ah, perhaps you can tell me if there is a place there called Mike Moran's Hotel?"

"Yes; I know Mike Moran well. He keeps a restaurant also."

"That is the man. Has he a brother Dick?"

"Yes."

"Ah, what sort of a fellow is he?"

The conductor shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," he said, slowly, "some people tell queer stories about Dick. I don't know anything bad about him."

"Oh, that's the way of it," said Hunter Williams, reflectively. "What sort of stories do they tell about him?"

"He is a sort of hard ticket. They do say he belongs to the Black Bar gang."

"The Black Bar gang?"

"Yes."

"Who are they?"

"Well, a gang of desperadoes who run the little mining town of Black Bar. Bad Man Smith is their trump card."

"I am interested," said Hunter Williams. "You see, I'm a lawyer from Chicago here, and I represent Dick Moran's wife. He has done nothing to support her for five years. She has heard of a gold claim of his out there, and I have got an attachment to serve on it."

"Is that so? Well, you want to carry a gun."

"A gun? Well, I guess not. Is there no law in Colorado?"

"Oh, yes; if you can enforce it. But there is little respect for the law in the mines."

"A pretty state of affairs. I shall try and resurrect it, then. The process shall be served for my client."

"Well, I wish you luck, sir."

The conductor passed on. The Bradys had heard all of this confab. It is hardly necessary to say that they were interested.

They studied Hunter Williams very closely.

"Well," said Harry, in a low voice, "we have got some points on Moran's place."

"That we have."

"It looks clear enough that the Black Bar gang make it a sort of rendezvous."

"Yes."

"Our appointment, then, with Dan Dixey is a sort of trap."

Old King Brady was thoughtful. Then he said:

"It may be so. But, trap or no trap, we will keep it."

"What?" exclaimed Harry, in surprise. "Is not that flying in the face of Providence? Is it not too great a risk?"

don't believe we shall take very great chances. Going into a trap with your eyes open is very different from going into it unprepared."

"That is true!" agreed Harry. "Perhaps you are right."

"If you have any fears——"

"Hold on!"

Harry made a menacing gesture of disapproval, and the old detective laughed. He liked to joke his young protege in a mild way.

The Bradys were deeply interested in Hunter Williams and his mission.

They felt sure that it would give them a chance to get a line on the gang.

Perhaps Smith himself might be at Moran's place, and they could get the desired evidence to convict him right there.

All sorts of possibilities and theories occurred to them. So they kept an eye on Williams.

The lawyer paid little or no heed to them.

He never once suspected who they were, or that their mission was leading them to the same locality.

It was a question with the Bradys whether they should seek his acquaintance or not.

But they finally concluded not to do so.

"It will serve our ends just as well if he does not know who we are," said Old King Brady.

And Harry agreed with him.

The train rushed on by night and day. The Mississippi River was crossed, and then the Missouri.

Then began the long run across the plains to the highlands of Colorado.

It was a long ride.

But finally the train rolled into Denver. The passengers disembarked at an early hour in the morning.

The Bradys now shadowed Hunter Williams to a carriage. They heard the order given:

"Drive me to Moran's hotel."

The Bradys fell back and walked away down the street. They had gained what they wanted.

By inquiry they learned where Moran's place was.

They went thither some while later. They applied for a room, and registered under assumed names:

"John Carter, Chicago, Ill."

"Frank Smart, Ditto."

They were assigned to a room on the second floor. By a happy chance it was next to that given Hunter Williams.

The detectives made sure that Williams was not in his room by listening at the keyhole.

CHAPTER II.

GATHERING CLEWS.

Old King Brady shut his jaws with a snap.

"There is no gain without some risk," he said, "and I

Then they went down into the barroom. Quite a large crowd of men of all classes was gathered there.

Mike Moran, the keeper of the place, was a rotund, genial boniface, who was always behind the bar, and ready to talk with everybody.

His brother Dick was in no way concerned with him in the business; but he was a frequent visitor to the place.

This the detectives learned.

Moran's place was extensive. It comprised the hotel, the barroom, a cafe for gentlemen on one street and for ladies on the other.

It was one of the busiest corners in Denver, and Moran had grown rich.

The detectives sat about the barroom for a while and awaited developments.

They knew that Williams was doubtless making arrangements to serve the damage suit on Dick Moran.

The Bradys wished to be on hand when this was done. Moreover, they wanted to get a look at Dick Moran.

They found that Dan Dixey of Black Bar was registered at the hotel.

A little later, by skillful inquiry, they identified him in the saloon.

He was of the miner type, with rough shirt and high boots. He carried an arsenal of weapons.

"Humph!" said Old King Brady, "he don't look like a bad man."

"That's right," agreed Harry; "perhaps we had ought to make his acquaintance."

"We might do that under our present names."

"That's right."

The idea seemed a good one.

After a while Old King Brady found himself standing near Dixey.

He turned suddenly and held out his hand.

"Ain't your name Dixey, from Black Bar?"

Dixey stared at the detective.

"Yaas," he replied, "that's my name, all right."

"Probably you don't remember me; but I've seen you over to the Bar a few years ago!"

"Oh, ye have?"

"Yes. How's things over there?"

"Pooty fair. Jest now we're doin' a little political work."

"Tryin' to run fer Congress?"

"Oh, I ain't. We're tryin' to wipe out the bad man over there. He an' the hull gang have got to go. That's the sentiment of every citizen of Black Bar."

"Sho' you don't mean Herman Smith, do ye?"

"He's the chap. So you know him?"

"Well, jest by reputation."

"Look here," said Dixey, suspiciously; "you ain't one of thet gang, are you? I know there's a lot of Smith's pals hangin' about here to-day. I reckon they mean to git a line on me. They'll do well ter look out, or I'll get a bead on them, an' I shoot durned straight."

"Keep your collar on," said Old King Brady, laconically. "I ain't that kind."

"Thet's enough, then. Have a drink."

As it would have been an affront to refuse, the old detective accepted the invitation.

He talked some while with Dixey, and learned many important facts.

He learned that a sensation had been created in Black Bar by the action of the Committee of Safety.

There was much excitement over the fact that New York detectives were coming to the Bar.

It was almost certain that if the detectives should appear openly in the little mining town there would be a revolution.

Party lines were tightly drawn.

Bad Man Smith was a clever politician, and had a grip on the votes of the worst class in the town.

He could be almost sure of rallying these to his support. It would mean civil war in the place.

But Dixey and his followers were full of sand.

"If the detectives come," declared Dixey, "they're going over to the Bar with me if the heavens fall."

Old King Brady also learned that many of the gang were hanging about Moran's.

Dick Moran was somewhere about the place; but Sam Clark, who was Smith's right bower, was sitting at a table near by.

"They know what I'm here for, an' they're waitin'," said Dixey. "But they won't do nothin' here. The law is too hot in Denver. They'll foller us to the Bar."

"I should think you were taking risks to come here alone," said the old detective.

Dixey fingered the butt of his revolver.

"It all right," he said; "I never seen the coyote I was afeard of yet."

Old King Brady joined Harry later. They held a conference.

"That is the situation," said the old detective. "Dixey is all right. He is a good, square man. But it's lucky we didn't meet him openly."

"Well, I should say so!"

"It would have spoiled our whole game."

"There is no trap."

"No, or at least Dixey is not in it."

"We have the best of it."

"Sure! All we need to do is to take up the trail here. Dixey will fail to meet us and will go back to the Bar disappointed."

"Yes."

"Then we can play a free hand there, for we will not be known. We ought to get Smith into the net with ease."

"Sure!"

The detectives were well pleased with the outlook.

They kept an eye on Clark. Presently a man entered the barroom and glanced toward Clark.

There was mutual recognition, and Clark sprang up.

"Hello, Dick!" he said, "I've been waiting for you."

"Oh, you have?"

"Yes."

"Well, what's the word?"

"All serene."

The two villains sat down at a table and called for drinks. The detectives studied Moran.

He was a man of powerful physique, and well dressed. He wore a derby hat and his trousers were turned up.

The two villains held a low-toned conversation for a long while. Suddenly two men entered the saloon.

The detectives gave a start.

One wore the badge of a sheriff. The other was the Chicago lawyer, Hunter Williams.

"There he is," said the sheriff, pointing to Moran. He went up to him and laid a paper on the table.

"I serve you with a writ of attachment on your Golden Hill mine," he said. "It is sworn by your wife, Esther Moran, of Chicago."

"Devils!" hissed Moran, furiously, leaping to his feet. "I'll jam your paper down your dirty throat."

"Easy!" said Hunter Williams. "You shall be arrested if you attempt violence."

The sheriff took a step forward.

"There is law in Denver, Dick Moran," he said. "If you had your deserts you would have been behind the bars long ago."

CHAPTER III.

A VILLAIN'S GAME.

Moran was convulsed with fury, but he was helpless. In his impotence he was speechless.

He only sat and glared at the sheriff and the lawyer.

"Your recourse is a defence," said the sheriff. "You must furnish bonds and appear in court."

"But that will not give him the case," said Hunter Williams. "It is a clear thing for my client."

"Curse her! She shall have nothing!" hissed Moran, finding his voice. "I will defend that mine against the world. Nobody can take it from me."

He raved, and cursed, and threatened; but the sheriff and the lawyer quietly withdrew.

Moran subsided when they had gone.

He sat moodily for a long time at the table drinking whisky at intervals.

Finally he made a motion to Clark.

"Come on, Sam," he said, "we will rig up a game to beat her yet."

The two men left the saloon.

The Bradys followed. But when they emerged the two villains had disappeared.

While the detectives were trying to decide which move was now best, old King Brady felt a touch on his arm.

He turned and saw Dixey.

"Well," said the Black Bar miner, "that was a black eye for Moran, wasn't it?"

"I should say it was."

"He sets his life by that mine."

"Does he?"

"Yes, and he'll certainly lose it. His wife has a sure case. He must settle."

"He looks to me like a fellow capable of revenge."

"Revenge? Ugh! Well, you may depend upon that."

"I've heard he is Bad Man Smith's right bower!"

"Waal, I guess that's right enough. I hope them New York detectives will show up pooty quick."

"How is it that you fellows at Black Bar don't convict an' hang that Smith?"

Dixey shrugged his shoulders.

"Thar's the rub," he said. "Ye see, they allus manage to put up a good defense. If there's a highway robbery, Smith has an alibi; if he shoots a man he allus has proof that it's in self-defense."

"Clever, isn't he?"

"Well, you bet! We are hoping these detectives will git hold of something to convict him."

"Is it not hard to get a safe jury in Black Bar?"

"Don't ye know thet juries in mining towns are mighty unreliable. Ther only way ter hang Smith is to catch him in one of his games in such a way that he can't crawl out of it. Then he's got to hang. An' there won't be no peace in Black Bar until he does hang."

"What if the detectives don't come?"

Dixey whistled softly.

"Ther ain't no reason fer thinkin' thet they won't," he said. "But in course if they don't, thar'll be some other plan. I don't like to shoot a man in ther back, but Smith has got to go. Thet's all there is to it."

And Dixey strode grimly away.

The detectives hung about the barroom for some while, waiting for Dick Moran to return.

His brother Mike was behind the bar, and looked serious.

He had heard of Dick's trouble and was much displeased. The Bradys overheard him say to an inquiring friend:

"Dick's a fool! He's no business comin' down here to Denver, anyway. If he'd stayed up to Black Bar they couldn't have got him."

"I 'low they can't take ther mine away from him, anyway," said this individual, who was evidently one of the gang. "How's a sheriff goin' to stand any show at Gold Hill?"

"Yes, they kin," declared Mike. "They'll take a posse of 'em up there. But if Dick hadn't been in Denver they'd never have served the writ on him."

The Bradys took in all these things. It was plain to them that a climax was near at hand.

Would Dick Moran call on Bad Man Smith for aid in his extremity? Would the "bad man" respond?

As yet the detectives did not know this remarkable individual by sight.

They learned that he was a citizen of the Bar, and seldom if ever came down to Denver.

"Oh, ye'll never see him down here," said their informant. "Thar's four or five warrants out fer him. He'd shoot his way right through a squad of police."

"So he's a dead shot?" asked Old King Brady.

"Well, I should say. I've seen him spoil many a ten-cent piece at sixty yards."

"Pretty ugly, is he?"

The miner who gave them this information stared at them.

"Ugly? Waal, thet depends. Herman Smith is one of ther politest gents ye ever met, if ye rub his fur the right way."

The detectives waited around the barroom for a long while for the return of Dick Moran.

He did not show up, and finally Harry said:

"Come on, partner! Moran is not our man. It is Smith. Let us take a look about the town."

"I'm with you!" said the old detective. "Perhaps Smith will show up here this evening."

"Perhaps so. If not, we can manage to take a run out to the Bar in a day or two."

"All right."

The detectives started out for their walk. Already the shades of evening had settled down.

They walked through some of the principal streets and mingled with the crowd.

It was nearly nine o'clock in the evening when they finally turned their steps back toward Moran's.

And as they drew near the street in which his place was located the detectives saw two men skulking in the shadows of an alley.

In spite of the gloom they recognized them as two of the Black Bar gang.

"What's up?" whispered Harry. "Do you see that?"

"Yes, and there's a couple more across the street."

"There are two more on the next corner."

"By Jove! One of them is Clark. Hello! there is Dick Moran just joining him."

The detectives were satisfied that something was up.

They were determined to learn, if possible, what it was.

They stepped into the shadow of a doorway and waited. They had not long to wait.

A man swung around the corner and walked toward Moran's place. Instantly the four members of the Black Bar gang came down the cross street as if to intercept him.

And Moran and Clark on the other street fell in behind him. They walked rapidly.

It required but an instant for the detectives to see the game of the villains.

"He is between two fires," said Harry. "They are going to do him up."

"That's what!" agreed Old King Brady.

"We must act quickly."

"Come on."

The Bradys instantly fell in behind Moran and Clark. They were disposed to wait until the crisis came.

The man whom the gang were lying in wait for was Hunter Williams, the lawyer.

Moran's purpose was to embroil him in what would appear to be a street row.

Before the gang were done with him, he would be in a condition which would undoubtedly preclude his acting further as the counsel for Moran's wife.

Doubtless they would kill him.

Moran was now close behind Williams. He held a heavy object in his hand.

"It is a sandbag," said Harry. "Look out, he is going to strike him."

Clark had darted to the right and past the victim. But quick as he was Harry shot in front of him, with drawn revolver.

Moran had leaped forward and grasped Williams' shoulder. His silk hat went reeling across the sidewalk.

The villain swung the sandbag aloft. It looked as if Williams was about to meet his death. But this did not occur.

Old King Brady grasped the villain's wrist, just as he was about to deal the deadly blow. Harry covered Clark with his revolver.

The old detective's grip was so powerful that Moran's wrist cracked, and the sandbag fell from his nerveless hand.

Clark stood at bay and glared savagely at Harry.

The other members of the gang beat a hasty retreat down the side street. Hunter Williams, the lawyer, turned and saw in a glance from what a fate he had been saved.

With a yell of fury Moran turned and tried to grapple with Old King Brady.

"Curse you! Let me go!" he yelled. "Who are you that dares to interfere with me like this? Let me go, I say. I'll kill you!"

"Steady!" said the old detective. "You meant to kill that man."

The old detective released his grip on Moran's wrist, but covered him with his revolver.

The villain was insane with fury. But he looked into the open muzzle of the revolver and his sense of discretion prevailed.

Clark was held motionless by Harry.

"Hey, you cowards!" yelled Moran, after the other members of the gang. "Are you going to leave us like this? Give us help!"

But none of the gang responded.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUAVE STRANGER.

"We are up against it," growled Clark. "This fellow has the drop on me!"

Moran glared at Harry and then at Old King Brady.

"Who are ye?" he growled. "Why do ye interfere with us?"

"I have told you once," said Old King Brady, "you were trying to kill this man."

"Well, what of it? He's an enemy and will kill me."

"Ah, I know this man," cried Hunter Williams. "He is defendant in a law suit which I am conducting. Gentlemen, you have saved my life. I am under obligations to you."

"No," said Old King Brady, "you are under no obligations. Only keep your eyes open hereafter."

"I shall do that."

"Will ye tell me who ye are?" demanded Moran, glaring at the Bradys.

"No," replied Old King Brady, quietly; "that's for you to find out. But I'll give you a pointer. Don't try such a game as this again. We would have been justified in shooting you dead."

"I shall procure a warrant for their arrest at once," declared Williams.

"See that you do," said Old King Brady. "I advise you to go after it at once."

"I will do it."

The lawyer rushed away at full speed. When he was out of sight Moran grew uneasy.

"Look here, gents," he said, "you don't know the whole story. I had a good reason for trying to kill that cuss."

"No man has a good reason for killing another by creeping up behind him in the dark."

"But ye ain't going to give us up to the peelers?"

Old King Brady hesitated.

He looked at Harry.

In that moment the same question occurred to both. Would it serve their ends better to place these wretches behind bars, or to allow them to have their liberty?

Old King Brady was not long in making a decision.

"Look here, pards," he said, "I don't know what your game was; but I couldn't see you kill that fellow. Now I'm half inclined to let you go——"

"Do it, and I'll forgive ye for interferin'," said Moran, eagerly. "Oh, I've got friends and influence in these parts. You won't be sorry."

"I haven't any quarrel with you!"

"In course not! What's the word?" asked Moran.

"He's goin' to do it," said Clark.

"Will ye agree to let that chap alone hereafter?" said Old King Brady.

"Of course we will."

"Certainly."

"All right," said Old King Brady. "Skip! You ain't got any too much time."

The two scoundrels got out of the way in a twinkling. The detectives proceeded to do the same.

"There's only one bad thing about this affair," said Old King Brady.

"What?"

"They have sized us up and will remember us when we appear in Black Bar. It may be a bad thing for us."

"Yes, but we could not see them kill that fellow."

"Of course not!"

"I have a plan."

"Well?"

"Let us go back to Moran's and settle our bill. Then we will start at once for the Bar."

"Agreed!"

The detectives hastened away at full speed. They were anxious to get out of Denver before Moran or any of the gang could return.

When they arrived at the hotel it was after ten.

They made sure that none of the Black Bar gang were hanging about. Then they settled their bill and left the place.

They went at once to another hotel, for they knew that it would be impossible to leave the city that night.

They would take an early train on the Colorado Southern. At a station called Dug Canyon they would leave the railroad and travel forty miles by stage to Black Bar.

The detectives at once retired for a good night's sleep.

They could not consider that events so far had greatly advanced them on the case.

Their purpose was to bring Bad Man Smith to justice.

Beyond gaining a better idea of the state of affairs in Black Bar they had accomplished little.

So they resolved to remain in Denver no longer, but to invade the lair of the lion at once.

They had no idea that Hunter Williams would figure further in the case, and dismissed him and Moran from further consideration.

Henceforth they believed that they had only Smith to deal with.

But the fallacy of this they were soon to discover.

The next morning, at an early hour, the Bradys boarded the train for Dug Canyon.

To their surprise Dixey was on board.

He hailed the detectives at once.

"Hello, pilgrims," he said. "So ye're goin' ter try yer luck at the Bar, eh?"

"We shall prospect a little out there," replied Old King Brady.

The miner's eyes twinkled.

"I'm wishin' ye luck!" he said. "But there's a hard gang up at the Bar."

"We ain't likely to bother anybody that don't bother us."

"Humph! thar's the whole story. They'll be likely ter bother you!"

"Is it that kind of a place?"

"You bet. But there's one man at the bottom of all that, and he's Herman Smith."

"Is that so?"

"You bet!"

"Well, I believe we will keep out of his way."

"As long as ye're strangers in the place, I'd advise ye to. He'll never openly attack me, fer I kin draw jest as quick as he can."

"He has no love for you, then?"

"Waal, I reckon not. He'd kill me on sight if he could. If you stay at the Bar long you'll see some lively times."

"Your detectives did not come?"

"Bah! they've likely got skeered. They've heerd what kind of a place the Bar is."

"Pretty courageous, aren't they?"

Dixey snapped his fingers.

"I've got ter do the work myself," he said. "I dunno nuthin' about it, nuther."

"That is hard for you!"

"Waal, you bet."

"But this Moran and the gang. Are they yet in Denver?"

"I reckon they'll foller me back to the Bar."

"Will they be there when we arrive?"

"Oh, no. I don't think so. They will come down on a later train. I say, kain't we rig up a game of Pedro?"

A number of the passengers were playing cards. The Bradys did not object, and a miner was found willing to make the fourth party.

They played for a while in friendly fashion.

Then the train whistled for a station.

Dixey sprang up.

"This is Durkee's Station," he said. "I git off here."

"I thought you were going to Black Bar?" said Old King Brady.

"So I am. But my hoss is here at Durkee's, and I know a short route. I hope to meet ye again, gents."

"Thank you."

Dixey got off. The next station, a half hour's run, was Dug Canyon, whence the detectives would take the stage to Black Bar.

"Do you want a fourth hand, gentlemen?" said a soft

voice behind Old King Brady. "I shall be pleased to oblige."

"Yes," said Old King Brady. "Let us keep on playing."

The newcomer was a tall, well-formed man of the large-boned, muscular type.

His features were almost swarthy, and his eyes were of that dead, expressionless black which betokens strong temper and deadly disposition. But he was as suave and elegant in manner as a French diplomat.

The detectives saw at once that he was no ordinary man.

Several hands were played. All the time the stranger studied the Bradys closely from behind his hand.

He played a strong hand, and showed that he was a gambler of consummate skill.

He made little conversation, but it was always facetious and most agreeable.

"We are near our station," said Old King Brady. "We can only play this hand out."

"Do you get out at Dug Canyon?" asked the stranger.

"Yes."

"Ah, prospecting, I suppose?"

"We expect to do some."

"The place to do mining is over to the Bar."

The detectives feigned interest.

"We heard that," said Old King Brady. "Indeed, we mean to go straight thither."

"Ah," replied the suave stranger. "We shall be traveling companions. I also am going there."

"Are you acquainted there?" asked Old King Brady.

"Only slightly. I might say that I know Herman Smith."

"Ah, is he not the bad man of the place?"

The stranger shrugged his shoulders.

"Pshaw! I don't know about his being so very bad. In this country the man who succeeds and lives is the man who shoots first. He shoots his foe in self-defence. Then a great hue and cry is raised, and he is dubbed the bad man of the town."

CHAPTER V.

THE STAGE RIDE.

"Then you don't think Smith so bad as he is painted," said Old King Brady.

"By no means," protested the stranger. "I know him well for one of the most charitable and reserved of men in the State."

"Then you would regard the charge of bad man as a slander?"

"Yes, and no. Nothing has ever been proved against him. He has been four times arrested for murder. In each case he was acquitted."

"On what ground?"

"That of self-defence. He has shot a number of men, just in time to save his own life."

"He must be a dead shot."

"Oh, indeed, that is true. Not a man in Colorado can use a pistol with him."

"We shall have much curiosity to see this wonderful desperado," said Harry.

The stranger smiled in a most peculiar way.

"Your curiosity will certainly be gratified," he said.

"Will you be kind enough to point him out to us?" asked Old King Brady.

"With much pleasure."

Just then the engine whistled for Dug Canyon, and the train began to slow up.

The detectives arose and the stranger did the same. When the train stopped they alighted.

The stage, with its six wild-tempered horses, was in waiting. All boarded it.

The two detectives and the stranger sat on top.

The driver, Jeff Bloom, a big, hulking fellow, dressed in buckskin, recognized the stranger and nodded. He opened his mouth as if to speak.

But the words died on his lips.

A significant glance from the stranger checked him. Then Bloom turned and looked curiously at the detectives.

A woman of a masculine type, dressed in a suit of fringed buckskin and carrying a couple of shining revolvers in her belt, got into the coach.

Two miners, seeing there was no room on top, did the same.

This constituted all the passengers. The Westerners lounging about the platform yelled:

"Look out fer thet swing hoss, Jeff! He'll give ye a tussle!"

A rippling series of oaths floated from the stage driver's lips.

"He'll hev to take his porridge," he cried. "Hi up, there! Git along, ye yaller-backed son of Satan."

The deadly whip cracked like a pistol. The lead horse went into the air.

The pole horses walked onto the heels of the swing horses. For a moment it looked like a mix-up.

But in some inexplicable way Bloom brought the lead

horses around to a right-angle and hauled the rebellious swing horses with them, and the team was off.

Once under way, the swing horses did their work as well as the others.

Up the mountain trail they went on the dead run.

The old coach swayed and swung like a ship in a tempest. A sharp voice came from the inside:

"Kain't you drive steady, Jeff Bloom? You are a-tossin' us all up in hyar."

The stage driver guffawed; but he turned his gaze downward and checked himself.

He looked down into the black muzzle of a revolver, held by a feminine hand, which was thrust through the door of the coach.

"Larf thet way agin, Jeff Bloom, an' I'll make a fish net of ye. I'll bet ye won't hold water if ye do."

"All right, Sal," growled the stage driver; "put up yer iron. I'll do ther best I kin, seein' as how yer bones are tender."

"My bones ain't tender, an' I'll have ye know it."

"Naw, I know they ain't. Kain't ye take a joke?"

"Jokin' in earnest don't go with me," said the bumptious lady of the buckskin gown, retiring into the depths of the coach.

The detectives looked at the suave stranger. He laughed and said:

"These gents are not used to this country, Bloom."

"Tenderfeet, eh?" said the driver, with a critical glance. "Oh, well, they'll learn the jumps afore they've been here long."

"I will confess," said Old King Brady, "that the woman inside impresses me as of unusual force and nerve."

"She's Gospel Sally," said Bloom, flicking the nigh leader's ear with the lash end of his whip. "She's ther greatest revivalist and convarter in these parts."

"The only one," put in the stranger.

"Yaas, thet's so," agreed Bloom. "Ther last man parson wot come hyar went out a flyin', with eleven bullet holes in his coat. Ther boys hed some fun with him. Somehow, ther Black Bar people ain't stuck on religion, 'ceptin' mebbe what Gospel Sally is able ter give 'em."

"What?" exclaimed Harry, in amazement. "Do you mean to say that she is a female preacher?"

"Thet's what!" declared Bloom. "An' ther best I ever heerd, tew. Oh, I tell ye Sally's all right. Ther boys all like her, fer she's got sand, an' kin shoot straight, tew."

The detectives looked at each other in surprise.

"She must be masquerading," said Old King Brady.

"Not by a durned sight," declared Bloom, emphatically.

"She's all right, I tell ye. I ain't no Christian, but I 'low thar ain't no person so square an' true in the hull of Colorado as Gospel Sally.

"Mebbe she's rough an' ready, like all of us out hyar, but thar's a heart in her buzzom, an' no one ever seen her do a wrong thing yit. I remember one time when Bill Delaney was smashed in a landside an' laid like ter die down at ther Bar.

"Everybody hated ther cuss, fer he was a treacherous snake, an' they was minded ter let him die; but Gospel Sally went down tew his cabin an' nussed him out of his sickness. When Bill came out in ther spring he was a different man.

"He wanted ter marry Sal, but she wouldn't have him. She jest went on preachin' jest ther same. She's got nerve, tew.

"I reckermember how two Switchback fellers came down ter one of her revival meetin's to hev some fun. They set in to bother her. She stood it fer a while, an' then she sez: 'Let us all pray.' She give a prayer in which she asked God ter fergive her, fer she was goin' ter kill them two Switchback clowns fer revilin' ther Almighty. Then she pulled out her poppers an' began firin'.

"Gee! but she could shoot. She shot the eyebrows off one of 'em, an' two holes in ther ear of t'other. They didn't dare ter shoot back, fer it's agin ther rules to shoot at a woman in Black Bar. They got out an' Big Mike, the wust critter in the mines, passed around his hat an' made a collection fer the gospel mission that she's goin' to build in Black Bar."

The detectives had listened with interest.

The suave stranger sat very silent, with a cloud on his face.

"She must be plucky," said Old King Brady. "I have no doubt she does much good!"

"I am sure she does," said Harry. "I can see that her method is the only one to reach the souls of these rough fellows."

"Humph!" said the stranger. "She's a fool! She can fool the citizens of Black Bar, and is doing it right along."

Jeff Bloom shot a quick glance at the speaker.

Then he lapsed into silence. The Bradys made no effort to keep up the conversation.

The coach rumbled on.

For hours it jolted over the rough mountain road.

Darkness had begun to settle down over the country when they came out upon a spur of the mountain wall, and lights were seen in the valley far below.

"There ye be!" shouted Bloom. "Thet's the Bar, an' I

kin smell Tom Kearns' whisky away up hyar. You bet I'll have a nip when we git down there."

The Bradys had been curiously impressed with the speech made by the stranger beside them, and some very curious actions on his part.

Now the Bradys were playing a deep part.

They were by no means such novices as they chose to allow those aboard the stage to think.

They had spent much time in the lawless parts of the West, and were entirely familiar with life in the mines.

Therefore they were on the alert for any sudden surprise which is almost certain to come. Old King Brady had been studying the stranger quite closely.

This resulted in some very sage conclusions.

The detectives had a silent method of conversation, such as is used often by the deaf and dumb.

They employed this now in such a manner that the stranger could not see them.

"It is my opinion," said Old King Brady, "that the fellow is crooked."

"So I think."

"The driver knows it. Did you see the look of understanding which passed between them?"

"Yes."

"They have sized us up for easy game. Did you know that one of the miners inside the coach wears a false beard?"

Harry was astonished.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EXCITING EXPERIENCE.

"You don't mean it!"

"It is true."

"Do you think there is any game?"

"We shall see. But I wonder what they are waiting for?"

"For darkness."

"That is possible. Hello!"

Jeff Bloom had thrown himself back with all force and brought his horses up to a sudden stop by running them into the mountain wall.

At this point the pass was crossed by another.

At this junction of the two trails a man sat on a black horse.

He was masked and two revolvers were held in his hands. They were aimed at Jeff Bloom.

"Whoa up! Jerusalem! Hail Columbia! What have we hyar? It's the Black Rider. Gents, we're in fer it now."

The Bradys sat quite still. The suave stranger said:

"Ah, gentlemen, this is too bad! Black Dick is goin to make us pay tribute."

"Do you think so?" said Old King Brady. "Not this trip, my friend."

The muzzle of the old detective's revolver came around like lightning and pressed the stranger's brow.

With a curse he also made a movement to draw, but Old King Brady said, in a voice of steel:

"Hands up! I'll scatter your brains if you make another move."

"You fool!" gritted the stranger; "what are you holding me for?"

"The meanest robber on this road. That's what you are. Harry, get in your work."

The young detective, however, had acted.

Quick as a flash he drew his revolver. He fired at the Black Rider. The black horse fell in a heap.

Out of the coach leaped the two disguised miners.

But Harry shot the hat from one of them, splintered the arm of the other, and continued to send bullets whistling around them. With terror they fled.

Then the young detective fired a bullet through Bloom's hat.

"Whip up your horses, there! You're in this game. We are not so tender as we look!"

Astounded and bewildered the driver gasped:

"Jerusha! Jimcracks! I should say you were the stuff, all right. Hi up thar, Reuben!"

Crack, crack! went the long whip, and the coach went rushing down the mountain trail.

Bullets hissed past them, but no harm was done. Down into the plain below rolled the coach.

The would-be road agents had met with defeat.

Old King Brady yet held the suave stranger under the drop.

But when the coach reached the lowland he said:

"Harry, take this fellow's pistols away!"

The young detective disarmed the fellow. He hurled the weapons far away into the bushes.

The stranger was livid, and quivered with fury.

"Devils!" he gritted. "I'll even this matter up! This is sorry work for you!"

Old King Brady laughed and quietly put his revolver back into his pocket.

"That's all right, my friend," he said; "but the next

time you pick up a couple of suckers, be sure you get hold of the right kind."

Suddenly the stranger did a queer thing. With a quick spring he went over the edge of the coach.

He alighted on his feet in the sand by the roadside.

Jeff Bloom, the stage driver, who was deadly pale and trembling, started to pull up his horses.

But the stranger yelled:

"Drive on, you fool! Take those greenhorns down to Black Bar. I'll meet them down there."

With this he dodged into the underbrush and was gone.

Bloom cracked his whip and away went the stage. The detectives looked after the stranger.

"Let him go," said Old King Brady. "We don't want him."

Then he leaned over toward Bloom and said:

"You seem to know that villain."

Bloom turned a white face toward the detectives.

"Waal, yaas; I reckon I do."

"Who is he?"

Bloom looked surprised.

"Don't yew know him?"

"If we did we wouldn't ask."

"Waal, his name is Smith."

The startled detectives looked at each other. A revelation burst upon them.

"Bad Man Smith?" gasped Old King Brady.

"Yaas, Bad Man Smith. You bet he'll see you in Black Bar. If I were you I'd travel further."

"Humph!" said Harry. "What do you take us for?"

"Waal, you'll see. Nobody ever crossed Smith yet an' lived long. He's got a private graveyard of his own. If you don't believe it, I'll show it to you up to Black Bar."

"He is an unmitigated scoundrel and a coward," declared Old King Brady, forcibly. "He bases his reputation upon his ability to drop a man with a pistol before the other can get ready. So far as courage goes he has not got it."

The stage driver whistled.

"Waal, you be green about hyar, an' no mistake," he said. "You'll change yer tune. I like yer grit, but it's mighty ill-timed."

"We don't think so."

"Waal, keep yer eye peeled."

"Don't you fear for us!"

Bloom expectorated tobacco juice and sagely shook his head. And now the stage rolled down into the one quaint street of Black Bar.

It did not differ much from the usual run of mining towns.

There was the collection of rough shanties, the hotel, the store, and the chimneys of the quartz mill.

For Black Bar was a gold mining town.

At this hour in the evening the hotel was ablaze with light. About the door lounged red-shirted miners and buckskin-clad plainsmen.

There were cowboys, Mexicans, and creoles, half-breeds, hunters, and plainsmen. It was a heterogeneous collection of humanity.

The stage drew up with a flourish before the hotel door.

The detectives and Gospel Sally were the only passengers aboard.

Through the entire fracas in the hills the female revivalist had kept silent.

Now, however, she sprang out of the coach and stood waiting for the detectives to descend.

Then she walked up to them and said:

"Gentlemen, I am Mrs. Sally Mead, the evangelist. I am much interested in you since that little affair of yours with Smith, and I would like the pleasure of a conference with you in private."

She looked keenly at them. The detectives were surprised.

But Old King Brady said:

"Your request shall be granted."

"Very good. Come to my room in the hotel at half-past nine. I will be waiting."

With this she strode through the crowd and into the hotel.

The rough men lifted their hats politely as she passed.

It was evident that she was well known and respected in the town.

The stage driver threw the reins to the stable boys and descended. He looked about him apprehensively as if he feared seeing Smith.

"Any trouble on ther way down, Bloom?" asked Tom Kearns, the rotund hotel keeper.

"Waal, yes; jest a leetle. We run up agin the Black Rider."

"What did he git?"

Bloom shrugged his shoulders.

"Got a bullet in his carcass somewhere. Leastwise his hoss did."

"The deuce! Who did thet?"

Everybody was listening with deep interest.

"Did ye see them two chaps I jest brought in? The old man an' the young man?"

"Yaas."

"Waal, keep yer eye on 'em. Thar'll be music in the Bar when Smith shows up here agin, an' don't you fergit it."

With which Bloom detailed the story.

All listened with interest and wonder. The hotel keeper clasped his hands nervously.

"And you say they're goin' to stay at ther Bar?"

"Yaas, thet's what they say."

"Well, Smith will make 'em change their minds."

"Thet was what I was thinking; but I don't know. Mebbe the Bad Man will git his match."

"Who a'r they?" asked a voice from the crowd.

Bloom looked around.

"How do ye s'pose I know! I never seed 'em before."

The detectives went up to the bar and asked for a room. They were assigned to one on the next floor.

Very quietly they performed their toilets and then went down to get something to eat.

They found that they attracted much attention.

"Confound that stage driver!" said Old King Brady, angrily, "he might have the good sense to keep his mouth closed."

"That's right."

The detectives ate their meal, and then Old King Brady glanced at his watch.

"It is time to keep that appointment with Gospel Sally," he said. "Shall we go right up?"

"Sure! What can she possibly have to say to us?"

"I don't know, but I am exceedingly curious to know."

The two detectives at once left the table.

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE WOMAN.

One of the attaches of the hotel showed the detectives the way to Gospel Sally's room.

It seemed that she had permanent apartments there, and came to the Bar in the natural course of her routine of travel.

The detectives entered the room. It was not large, but was fitted up finely for that exiled region.

There were books and pictures, something unusual for a mining camp.

Mrs. Mead received the detectives graciously.

"Indeed, I am glad to see you," she said, warmly, and with an entirely different manner from that she assumed in public. "Pray be seated. You are punctual."

The detectives sat down. Now that they had a better view of this extraordinary woman, they were much impressed.

She was a remarkable person beyond dispute. Her face, though tanned and seamed with exposure almost to the hardness of a man's, yet had an inexpressible softness which was almost spiritual.

Her clear blue eyes, fearless and full in their gaze, showed the character of the owner.

There was that in them which commanded the respect of man and the trust of helpless children. She was the champion of the oppressed.

Her masculine manner and style of dress did not by any means obliterate the woman of tender impulses.

"You no doubt wonder why I have called you here," she said; "but I have very good reasons."

"We have been pleased to respond," said Old King Brady.

"For which I am grateful. I can see that you are not of the type common in the mines. Yet you can hold your own with any of these lawless men, as you proved a short time ago."

"We did our best," said Harry. "It was our only course."

"And your work was effective. I do not know what your opinion of me is. Most people from the East regard me as a very coarse type of woman, and seem to think that I unsex myself in dwelling among these rough men. But I assure you my purpose is based upon the highest of principles."

"I am here as the instrument of God, to try and do His work. If I, with my weak efforts, can so much as bring the light of a better life to even one wretched soul, I shall have accomplished something."

"Certainly your motives are praiseworthy," declared Old King Brady. "And perhaps your methods are of the most available sort."

"I think so," she said, with a light of pleasure in her eyes. "I do reclaim a soul now and then. Sometimes a man will not repent until death is upon him; but even then it is a victory."

"You are right."

"But enough of myself. I have only offered this as an introduction. Now let us speak of other matters. You have a mission here."

"That is true," agreed Old King Brady.

"I am not trying to draw from you what that mission is," she said, quickly. "I will only say, though, that I can greatly aid you, and my services are at your disposal."

She looked at the detectives penetratingly.

The Bradys were astonished.

"You speak as though you had an idea what our business is in Black Bar," said Harry.

She smiled quaintly.

"What is the use of dissembling?" she said. "I do know."

"Indeed!"

"You are detectives"

The Bradys were startled. They stared at this remarkable woman.

"How do you know that?" asked Harry.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"You have been expected," she said. "Dan Dixey went down to Denver to meet you. I can understand. You chose to come alone. I spotted you the moment you got on to the coach. I heard all your conversation with Smith, and I knew you would have trouble with him before you reached the Bar."

"This is remarkable."

"Not at all. A woman can make shrewd deductions as well as a man. But do not fear; I am your true friend."

"I believe you," said Old King Brady; "but tell me: Do you think Smith knew us?"

She shook her head.

"No," she replied; "if he had I think he would have shot you dead on sight."

"He is murderous!"

"He knows that your presence in Black Bar is a menace to his safety. He is a bad man."

"Then our next meeting——"

"Look out! Be sure you see him first. He is cunning, and he is deadly. Do you have the art of disguise? Of course. Well, to make it safe, travel in disguise."

"I want to ask you why the citizens of Black Bar submit to such a tyrant?"

"He has too much political influence. He is hand in glove with Dick the Road Agent. But Dixey may yet be able to wipe him out. If a good, clear charge could be brought against him the citizens would hang him. But he manages to keep clear of the notions of the law hereabouts."

"It seems to me he has done enough to convict him already."

"So he has. But law in the mines is not law in the East. You see he claims he killed all these men in self-defense. There are always some of his gang around ready to swear to that effect."

"That is an evasion."

"Yes, but it counts. It must be proved that a man maliciously kills another before he can be convicted of murder."

"Dixey comes out openly against him. Why does he enjoy immunity from Smith's vengeance?"

"For the reason that if he killed Dixey the citizens would have a case against him and hang him. Dixey is his avowed enemy, and Smith would have a motive, but not proper justification, for Dixey is a sheriff."

"Ah, I see. Then he will not attempt to shoot us on sight or without some fancied provocation."

"Oh, no! He will pick a quarrel with you, or he will shoot you in the dark."

"Well, we can be on our guard for that."

"To be sure. Yet, I would advise you to take no chances. You are in constant danger. Your secret is safe with me, and I am going to aid you all I can."

"Thank you!"

"If Bad Man Smith can be properly eliminated from this town—that is, through the power of the law—the example will effect a regeneration in the place. Honest miners will feel safe and the crooked ones will decamp for other fields."

"That is right," declared Old King Brady. "You have spoken truly, Mrs. Mead. We thank you for your kind hints, and I hope we may co-operate heartily in this work. As you say, it is necessary to make an example of Smith, and in a legal way. That is the work cut out for us."

"I wish you success."

"Thank you! Now do you fancy that Smith will show up in the town to-night?"

"He may do so. I would advise you to be on your guard."

"We shall be."

The detectives shook hands warmly with Gospel Sally, and then went back down to the bar-room.

A great crowd of miners were at the bar.

The detectives carefully studied them all.

Doubtless many of them were members of the gang in collusion with Smith to keep the town in a state of terrorism.

The Bradys kept in the background and waited.

Some of the men at the bar grew boisterous. While the uproar was at its height a sharp ejaculation went around which had a curious effect.

An almost dead silence reigned in the place.

Many eyes were turned toward the door. As yet no person stood there.

But suddenly a man appeared on the threshold.

He paused there a moment and swept the room with his haughty gaze. There was a hush.

It was Smith.

The bad man advanced slowly and let an approving smile flit across his face. Then he walked toward the bar.

Right and left the crowd fell back as he passed.

He leaned over the bar and said curtly:

"A mint julep!"

The bar-tender served it with alacrity. Smith now swept a gaze about the room.

He apparently had not seen the detectives.

"Gents," he said, raising his glass. "This is my treat. Every man drinks with me."

There was a rush for the bar. The barkeepers were busy dealing out the "poison."

From all parts of the room the men came. None thought of refusing—except two. These were the Bradys.

They continued to sit at their table.

The bad man's eagle eye again swept the room.

"All up!" he said. "It's my treat."

Then his gaze rested on the detectives. The result was interesting.

Mechanically he placed his glass on the bar.

A wolfish, sinister glare was in his dead-black eyes. He seemed to look over their heads as he said:

"All up to drink."

But the Bradys did not move. There were white, scared faces in the crowd. All stared at the two daring Easterners.

A deep hush fell upon the room. It was a critical moment.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BAD MAN MEETS HIS MATCH.

But the Bradys were absolutely unmoved. Not a line in their faces betrayed anything but the most utter indifference.

The "bad man" continued to wait. Then one of the miners stepped forward and whispered:

"Come up and drink, gents. Ye're green here, an' don't know the ropes. But ye mustn't refuse Smith. He's a bad man."

"Eh!" said Old King Brady, coolly. "I don't care to drink."

"Nor I!" said Harry.

The bystanders gasped.

All stared at Smith. Not one but expected to see the two foolhardy Easterners shot in their tracks.

There was a full minute of silence.

Then Smith advanced to the table with a smile and an urbane manner.

"Gentlemen," he said, "don't let that little affair of the afternoon mar the courtesy of this occasion. I beg the honor of your company at the bar."

Old King Brady elevated his eyebrows.

"Oh, you are our companion of the coach!" he said. "Since you request us so kindly, we will return our warmest thanks and beg you to excuse us this time. We are surfeited with drink."

"You at least owe it to me as a concession for the bad defeat I suffered at your hands this afternoon."

"Indeed, we are disposed to regard that as your victory. You escaped us."

Smith's face flushed slightly. His patience was sorely tried.

He knew if these men carried their point he would lose a point in the respect of the crowd, and they would gain a point.

"You don't know who I am," he said, in a low tone. "You may need my assistance if you decide to remain in Black Bar."

"Yes, we know who you are," said Harry; "and we intend to remain in Black Bar, and feel very sure we shall not need to avail ourselves of your kind offer."

Smith could keep up the masked battle no longer.

Lightning leaped from his eye.

"Will you drink with me?" he demanded, curtly.

"No," replied Old King Brady, in a voice of thunder.

Smith's hand went to his belt, and he whipped out his revolver. His face was cruelly murderous.

But with that very movement Harry's hand came up from under the table.

Crack! Crack!

The pistol was hurled from the bad man's hand, and his arm fell powerless with the shock.

Harry's aim had been true and the bullet struck the bad man's weapon just back of the cylinder, burning the flesh on his hand.

With a sharp exclamation of pain, the villain tried to reach for his other revolver with his left hand.

But the muzzle of Harry's weapon stared him in the face.

"Hands up!"

Herman Smith had never before in his hard career been brought to a pass like this. It was a shock and a surprise which for a moment dazed him.

Moreover, he was an arrant coward, and had the fear of death which every desperado knows.

So instinctively he raised his hands.

It was a tableau of the most thrilling sort. A pin could have been heard to drop in the place.

The stupefied crowd stood agape with sheer amazement. They could hardly believe their senses.

That the ruler of the mines, the terror of the West, Bad Man Smith, should be thus "brought to his milk" by a couple of Eastern tenderfeet was a most incredible thing.

"Smith," said Harry, in a set tone, "you have held sway in these parts for a good while. Every dog has his day, and you have had yours. You have simply run up against a game you don't know. Now, if you ever dare to insult me or my partner, or molest us again in any way, I'll shoot your black heart full of holes. Remember that."

Smith did not reply.

There was a terrible light in his expressionless eyes and a set expression upon his colorless face.

Harry reached forward and took his other pistol from his belt.

"I'll clip your wings," he said. "Now, I'll give you two minutes to get out of this place."

Still Smith did not speak.

He turned and strode out of the barroom into the night.

For some while the crowd was silent. All gazed with a sort of awe at the detectives.

The Bradys were as cool as ice. They returned the stare of the crowd with interest.

Presently Tom Kearns, the hotel keeper, came out from behind the bar.

"Gents," he said, "I want to tell ye that ye're up against a hard gang. I like yer pluck, and ye're the first to hold Smith up, but he's got power behind him, an' he'll not rest till he has squared accounts with ye."

"Look here, friend," said Old King Brady, in a voice of steel. "That's all right; but he is only a man, and cold lead will find him as well as any coyote. Now, we're in Black Bar to stay, and Smith nor Satan is going to drive us out. What's more, he won't get off so lucky next time."

Kearns went back to his work.

Drinks were ordered, and soon business was resumed as usual.

But during the evening the detectives were the cynosure of all eyes.

Black Bar had a sensation such as it had never known. Bad Man Smith had been bearded by a couple of Easterners.

The Bradys retired somewhat later. They slept soundly.

The next day they were astir at an early hour.

They went down to breakfast. A few people were in the barroom as they passed through.

The detectives knew that they were closely watched. They had made themselves conspicuous in Black Bar.

But this did not trouble them.

After breakfast they walked out upon the street.

At the corner was a knot of men. They at once stared at the Bradys. The detectives, however, affected not to notice it.

"They are certainly right onto us," said Harry.

"Yes, that is right."

"No doubt many of Smith's gang are keeping watch of us."

"There is no doubt of it."

"It is well to proceed with care and caution."

"We must have eyes in the back of our heads."

"Just so."

The Bradys passed down the street of the little mining town, when suddenly a familiar voice sounded behind them.

"Hello!" It's the two pilgrims from Denver who saved the lawyer's life down there. I say, friends, don't you know me?"

It was Dixey.

The detectives shook hands warmly with the president of the Committee of Safety.

Dixey's eyes were like moons. He regarded the detectives in an incredulous way.

"Ye needn't tell me the story," he said. "I've heard it all. But is it true?"

"What?" asked Harry.

"Have you met Smith?"

"We have," said Old King Brady; "at least, this is the name he goes by here."

"And—and you got the best of him? Oh, I was told about it."

"Well, perhaps we did. Certainly we defended our position."

"He wanted ye to drink?"

"Yes."

"And ye wouldn't?"

"No."

"And ye got the drop on him and backed him down?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't ye kill him on the spot?"

"We did not care to stain our hands with blood."

"But he deserved it, and it would have been a philanthropic job. Oh, everybody would have been on your side."

"Well, he will get his deserts in due time."

"Well, gents, I admire your sand; but look out! Don't be reckless. He has got an awful gang back of him."

"Why should we fear him? You admit that the best people of the town are with us."

"So they are; but Smith might kill you as he has killed others."

"Would we go unavenged?"

Dixey clenched his fists.

"Well, you bet you wouldn't," he said. "If the scoundrel harmed you I for one would not sleep till I saw him hung."

"Probably he knows that, and for that reason we are safe."

"That may be; but thar's a halter ready for Smith. I tell you thar'll be hot times in the Bar right soon. Look out for it!"

"We shall endeavor to defend ourselves."

"And I guess you kin do it; but keep mighty quiet an' wait. Our time will come."

Dixey turned and strode away. The detectives turned to retrace their steps; but just then something zipped past Old King Brady's face.

He instantly stepped behind the corner of a cabin.

"Look out, Harry," he cried. "Somebody has fired at us."

Harry heard the pistol crack, and looked in all directions to locate the owner; but he could see no one who might be regarded with suspicion.

Two more bullets cut past the detectives. They concluded it was time to adopt a bit of precaution.

CHAPTER IX.

HUNTER WILLIAMS AGAIN.

The detectives had got behind a cabin. Here they waited developments and calculated their chances.

They knew that their foes were firing upon them from hiding.

They were sadly handicapped, and it was a question as to how they were to deal with the foe.

Things had certainly reached a critical pass when they could not walk the street without being fired upon by hidden foes.

This was only evidence of the power of Bad Man Smith.

But the Bradys speedily found that the Smith element was not the entire element of the town.

Dixey came running back.

"What's this?" he cried. "You have been fired upon?"

"Yes."

The president of the Committee of Safety made a coyote call with his mouth. It was caught up and carried down the street.

Instantly armed men came running from huts and from side streets. In less time than it takes to tell it Dixey was surrounded by his allies.

"Let them come on if they want to make a battle of it," he shouted, furiously. "Contemptible cowards, to fire on a man from hiding."

No more shots were fired.

The vigilantes, for such they might be called, searched the vicinity; but the cowardly gang had disappeared.

Dixey was much excited.

"Gentlemen," he said to the Bradys, "you may see how important it is that you keep under cover. Remain at the hotel and wait until we have wiped Bad Man Smith out of existence."

"My friend," said Old King Brady, quietly, "that is the very thing we cannot do. We are here to put Mr. Smith out of business."

Dixey stared.

"Who are you?" he demanded, in a puzzled way.

Old King Brady laughed.

"For the present we are two humble prospectors," he said.

"That is all we can say."

But the Bradys went back to the hotel.

For the rest of the day they remained there; but the whole town was astir.

It was plain that matters were coming to a head.

The two factions were nerving themselves to the conflict which they instinctively knew must come.

Dixey said resolutely:

"The hour has come. Smith must go!"

The next morning people in Black Bar rose to find that on every tree and the wall of every house was pinned a huge placard, which read:

"NOTICE.

"It having come to pass that a respected citizen of Black Bar is required to submit to a gross and unwarranted injury and insult in response to a polite and courteous request to drink at the expense of the undersigned, at the hands of two well-known ruffians from the far East, where only hogs are raised, be it therefore decreed by the Black Band of Black Bar that said objectionable parties are notified to leave town immediately on pain of death.

Signed:

"H. Smith."

A tremendous sensation was created. The crisis had come. The line was drawn.

Those citizens of the community disposed to be law-abiding at once banded together.

They were addressed by Gospel Sally in her unique way. When preaching to the miners she used the vernacular and terms so familiar to them.

"There is a God in Israel, and He is a just God!" she shouted. "He's goin' ter see His children protected. Ye are fightin' fer a holy cause. The people of Black Bar must be freed from this demagoguery and black-leg rule. Arouse, all of ye! Turn the villains out! Hang Bad Man Smith to the nearest mountain pine!"

The woman's eloquence fired the people.

At once Dixey caused placards to be pasted over the others. Thus they read:

"To Bad Man Smith and his band of cut-throats: The people of Black Bar give fair notice that Smith and his gang must depart from the Bar, never to return. On penalty of death.

Signed:

"The Committee of Safety."

The quartz mills closed down, miners came in from their claims, and there was the appearance of war in the town.

It was hard to tell, however, just who were friends and who were foes.

The partisans of Smith mixed with the honest citizens and shouted with them.

But every word spoken, every move made, was certainly carried to the demagogue of Black Bar.

Smith did not appear in the town for a full week.

Dick Moran and Clark came back from Denver and hung about Kearns' Hotel.

They were bold and insolent in their manner, and regarded the detectives threateningly, but dared to make no hostile advances.

This was just what the Bradys wanted.

They proceeded at once to shadow the villains.

They hovered about the two scoundrels like shadows. Sometimes they were in disguise and sometimes not.

It was not long before they became possessed of valuable facts.

Moran and Clark were acting as spies for Smith, who was quartered in a mining camp some distance up in the hills.

The Bradys also learned that Smith was co-operating with Black Dick, the bandit, in a descent upon the town.

"We'll wipe 'm off ther earth!" was Smith's grim determination. "I jest want to get my grip on them two tender-feet from the East."

The Bradys kept on their guard. They believed it to be the best policy to wait, for it seemed certain that a climax was at hand.

But just then a new factor appeared on the scene.

One day the Denver stage brought in a number of visitors. One of them wrote his name on Kearns' register:

"Hunter Williams, Chicago."

"The lawyer!" gasped Harry. "He has nerve to come here."

"He is a neryv' chap, anyway," said Old King Brady. "We learned that in Denver."

"But he will get killed."

"We must keep an eye out for him."

"That is right."

Williams sauntered into the barroom and at once recognized the Bradys.

He was apparently delighted to see them.

"This is a pleasure," he cried. "Truly I feel that I owe you a great debt, for you saved my life."

"I hope you will use extreme caution here," said Old King Brady. "This is a dangerous place just now."

The lawyer looked at the old detective curiously.

"I appreciate your kind advice," he said; "but I am here in the interest of my client, and I must do my duty."

"Have you seen Moran?"

"No."

"He was here a few moments ago. Ah! there he is now."

Moran and Clark entered the barroom at that moment. The lawyer instantly drew himself up.

His eyes flashed fire.

"Who is the constable or sheriff here?" he asked.

Old King Brady indicated Dixey, who stood near.

"He is the man highest in authority," he said.

Williams walked up to Dixey and touched him on the arm.

"I beg pardon," he said. "Are you not the sheriff?"

"At present," replied Dixey.

"Then I wish you would execute this warrant for me. I procured it in Denver, and it calls for the arrest of Richard Moran and Samuel Clark."

Dixey gave a great start.

"What is the charge?"

"Assault with intent to kill."

"Upon whom?"

"Myself. I have plenty of witnesses. These gentlemen here witnessed and saved my life."

Dixey glanced at the Bradys, and then at Williams. He saw the point at once.

Old King Brady stepped forward.

"I believe it is a fine plan," he said. "Assert the law. Let the people know that things are going to be run on the square in Black Bar. Here is a chance."

"Capital!" exclaimed Dixey. "But the offense was committed in Denver. It must be tried there."

"Very true; but you can make the arrest and send the man to Denver for trial. It will have a tremendous moral effect."

"I shall push the matter as far as the law will permit," said Williams, grimly.

It did not take Dixey long to make up his mind.

"This will be the first arrest of this kind ever made in Black Bar," he said.

"All the better. The people will know there is a new order of things here."

"You are right."

Dixey read the warrant again. Moran and Clark were drinking at the bar.

They did not notice the lawyer. Williams approached them.

"Ah, gentlemen," he said, "we meet again. This is a pleasure to me, I assure you."

Moran and Clark turned. Then the former's eyes gleamed maliciously.

"So," he exclaimed, "you have dared to follow me to Black Bar. I presume ye think that ye are as safe here as in Denver?"

"I know that I am," said Williams, loftily; "and I shall press my client's claim to a settlement."

"We'll have the settlement right here!" growled Moran, feeling for his revolver.

CHAPTER X.

A PROCLAMATION.

There was no doubt but that it was his intent to shoot Williams on the spot.

Such things had occurred in Black Bar without any inquiry heretofore, and perfect immunity for the murderer.

Moran forgot for the moment the present state of affairs in the town.

But before he could draw his revolver something happened.

Dixey thrust a revolver under his nose.

"Hands up!"

The command was not one to be ignored. Up went the villain's hands.

"Thunder!" he gasped. "Air you in this game, Dan Dixey?"

"You bet I am. Thar's goin' to be no more foul shooting in this 'ere town, Dick Moran; you're under arrest."

Dixey pulled out a pair of handcuffs.

Moran saw threatening faces all about him.

Clark, seeing the peril of his position, gave a leap and went through the door like a shot.

"Let him go!" said Dixey, grimly. "He'll carry the news to headquarters. I reckon Herm' Smith will find out yet 'ere 'ere bizness."

"What do ye arrest me for?" asked Moran.

"I have a Denver warrant for assault with intent to kill."

Moran glared at Williams.

"The way of the transgressor is hard," said the lawyer, philosophically. "I came out here to get you, Dick Moran, and it looks like my game."

"Curse you!"

But Dixey slipped the rusty handcuffs on the villain's wrists.

"Give us a good room, landlord," he said. "We want to hold him until we kin rig up a plan to get him back to Denver."

"I'll take him back on the next stage," said Williams.

But a dozen voices dissented.

"Ye can't do it," they cried. "Black Dick will be layin' for ye."

Moran was confined under guard in a room in the hotel. Then a consultation was held.

It was finally decided that four good plainsmen, mounted, should take Moran, bound to a broncho, and ride to Denver with him at night.

Williams could go on by stage the next morning.

"But look out fer Black Dick," said Dixey. "Jehovah! but I wish we could try that cuss here. We would make the trial short and sweet."

"The law will not admit of that," said Williams, who seemed to be perfectly confident of the efficacy of the law. "If Black Dick delays me on my trip to Denver, I'll have a warrant out for him, too."

At this all laughed.

Just then an uproar was heard in the barroom below.

"What is up?" demanded Dixey.

Leaving the prisoner under guard, all went down. Two horsemen, armed to the teeth, were at the door. Boniface Kearns was pale and agitated.

"I tell ye, gents, it won't do," he declared. "Smith holds too good a hand. Ye'll have to toss the deck an' let that man go free."

"What are you talking about, you coward!" cried Dixey, angrily. "I believe you're one of Smith's best bowers."

The Bradys and Dixey pushed their way out to the door.

"What do you want, Lon Kimball?" asked Dixey of one lanky rider. "An' you, Jose Garcia, you yaller dog, you?"

The Mexican showed his teeth in a demoniac grin and looked at his companion, who spurred his mustang nearer.

"Smith sent us down hyar to say that if ye don't release Dick Moran inside of an hour he'll burn every house in Black Bar an' make a desert of it, an' shoot every livin' man in the place."

Dixey now showed what kind of timber he was made of. There were plenty of pale faces about him, for everybody feared the Bad Man.

But Dixey was cool, and did not turn a bit paler. He looked contemptuously at the messenger.

"Kimball, you're a fine specimen of a man ter consart with sich a pup of hell as Smith. Do ye remember when I pulled ye out of Devil's Flume, an' saved yer wuthless life? An' ye take sides ag'in me now, do ye? I've a durned poor opinion of suckers of your stripe, faugh!"

Kimball flushed and looked mean; but he growled!

"I'm jest obeyin' orders."

"Whose orders?"

"Herman Smith's."

"Ain't ye proud of yer master?" said Dixey, with withering scorn. "Well, I'll tell ye what ye kin do. Ye kin go back an' tell Smith to come down jest as quick as he wants to. We are ready for him, an' we'll agree to hang his skin up on the best pine tree about hyar as a skeercrow fer the buzzards. Now, go out!"

The two messengers backed their mustangs out of the crowd and rode away.

Dixey turned and drew his hand across his forehead.

"Thar!" he declared. "I feel better. I never cum so near killin' a man afore in my life."

"But what air we goin' to do?" asked the trembling landlord. "'Tain't nuthin' to you, Dixey, fer you ain't got no hotel to burn."

"Look hyar, Kearns," said the plucky sheriff, "if you'll only show some sand you won't lose yer hotel, an' this community will get rid of a gang of pups. It's a case of fight now."

"That's right," cried Old King Brady; "and let every true man rally in this place."

A cheer went up from the half a hundred miners in the place.

Dixey and the Bradys now went around among the men and aroused their spirits.

"We can whip Smith and his gang to a standstill!" cried Old King Brady; "and if we can catch him we have now the right to hang him to the nearest tree. The law can protect him no further."

Wild cheering followed.

In a short while the miners were organized.

The gamblers, loungers and ne'er-do-wells, always to be found in a mining camp, disappeared.

They had evidently gone over to the enemy's camp.

But as they were generally cowards, the defenders of Black Bar felt glad to be rid of them.

Kearns plucked up courage when he saw how things were going.

"Of course I want to get rid of Smith as well as any of ye," he said. "He's a bad egg, an' I'm afeard of him myself."

"Thar's no better time than now to do it," declared Dixey.

But Smith failed to make good his threat to return in an hour and wipe Black Bar off the map.

It proved an idle threat.

For two days nothing was heard of him; but this did not deceive Dixey or the detectives.

They knew that he was planning some coup, and they were more vigilant than ever.

Hunter Williams, with an escort, departed for Denver with his prisoner.

It transpired later that Moran was tried and compelled to settle with his wronged wife, and also to serve a long term in prison.

But the third day after Moran's arrest Smith showed his hand.

The miners of Black Bar awoke one morning to find a notice posted on buildings and in every conspicuous place.

"TO THE VOTERS OF BLACK BAR:

"The annual election of town officers will be called Thursday at Kearns' Hotel. It is desired to name a popular candidate for High Sheriff. The well-known candidate, Herman Smith, presents his name and his past record to the voters of

Black Bar, and asks their support for the office. He pledges himself to faithfully serve their needs, and stands for Human Liberty and Equality in the town. Every man shall have his rights. The tyrant and the would-be reformers must go.

"Stop and think!

"Are your personal liberties dear to you? Do you want to be bound up and hampered by unnecessary laws which deprive the miner of the Freedom and Rights which the so-called Civilization of the East frowns upon? Do you want your liquor and card games forbidden in Black Bar? Do you want a court and a jail, a church and Sunday school, an Old Maids' Sewing Society and other abominations where now the miner has unbounded rights? Freedom is the miner's life. Be on hand! Vote for Herman Smith and Popular Government! Election Thursday morning. Bring along your Pop-Guns to see that no Psalm singing Hypocrite of the Highfalutin' East chokes off your Rights and the Freedom that belongs to you.

Signed:

"Committee of Miners' Rights."

This unique and startling effusion created a gigantic sensation in Black Bar.

There was no use denying that it had a tremendous effect upon the rough miners.

In an insidious way it appealed to the lawless spirit which, it was needless to deny, lurked in every heart.

The Bradys saw the impending danger.

With Dixey, they strove in every way to counteract this sudden damaging blow. They harangued the hesitating miners, and did all in their power to hold them firm.

But in spite of all, there were constant desertions and the little band of defenders grew thinner all the while.

"Whew!" exclaimed Dixey, almost in despair. "If they was to attack us in our present state they would wipe us off the face of the earth."

And Thursday was at hand.

CHAPTER XI.

SMITH PLAYS A WINNING HAND.

It was a shrewd and skillful move which Smith had made.

In spite of his record as a bad man, he was yet to a degree popular with the majority of the miners.

His bluff way of treating the crowd, and at judicious times throwing money broadcast was mistaken by them for true philanthropy.

So that many of the more credulous shook their heads and said:

"Smith may be bad in some ways, but he is the miners' friend all the same."

This hallucination was the terrible thing confronting the reformers. The Bradys saw it all.

They saw that some powerful lever must be employed to overthrow this sentiment.

They set their wits to work to devise what this should be. Thursday was at hand.

The election scheme so cleverly concocted by Smith had won the favor of the miners.

"That's the best way to settle it," many said.

"Let the majority rule."

"If the people want Smith, let them have him. If they want Dixey they'll say so."

Dixey grew desperate as the hour drew near. Only a handful of his followers were left.

Some of these now came to him and said:

"How is it goin' to be if we have law an' order in Black Bar? Will it shut off ther card games and the drinks?"

Dixey looked squarely at his interlocutors and said:

"You pretend to be honest miners?"

"We are."

"Then what do you think is best for you and for me? Gambling dens and brothels, or good, clean, respectable government, where every man's life is safe?"

"Then ye would close up the card joints?"

"You would have more money if they were closed up."

This was the straw that broke the camel's back. The weak point of the miner is his love of gaming, though he may be ever so hard hit.

It is a well-known fact that gamblers have a powerful influence over their victims, the miners.

Miners will go a long way, and stick to poorer claims, to be near the gaming places.

And thus it was in Black Bar.

So when Dixey came to count up his men later he found that he had but a small number with which to meet the foe.

However, the brave reformer resolved to stand his ground.

"All is," he said, "we will suffer defeat."

"I don't believe it will be more than temporary," said Harry.

"Nor I," declared Old King Brady. "They will soon have enough of Smith."

"I believe you are right," agreed Dixey, hopefully. "If we are beaten at the election, we will simply retire and wait for the tide to turn in our favor."

At the appointed hour Smith and his followers arrived. Fully three hundred men—gamblers, mountaineers and miners—came pouring into the town.

It was a lively time.

There was no hostility on either side. Smith took the lead on one side and Dixey on the other.

The voting began. Speeches were in order.

The bad man shone forth as an orator of no mean ability.

His words were conclusive and convincing, his manner plausible and took with the miners.

They cheered him to the echo. Then Dixey addressed them.

They listened with respect and silence. Some questions were hurled at the reformer.

The Bradys watched all closely.

Old King Brady said:

"Smith has won and lost. This very victory will prove his defeat."

This anomalous statement was destined to prove prophetic. The voting was done in a characteristic way. Those in favor of Smith for sheriff were to stand on one side of a line.

Those in favor of Dixey were to remain with him.

The question was quickly decided. Not a score of men remained with Dixey.

The victory was overwhelming. Dixey bowed his head sadly and said:

"I acknowledge defeat. This is a dark day for Black Bar. This I am compelled to say, not from my own defeat, but the election of a man of Smith's character. The people will surely rue it."

The crowd dispersed. Dixey and the Bradys returned to the hotel.

The detectives were confident of ultimate success.

"It's all right, Dixey," said Old King Brady. "Things are going our way. We shall win. All we can do now is to sit still and wait for results."

"Do you think Smith will attempt to molest us?" asked Harry.

"That is a question," said Dixey.

"We must be on our guard."

The new regime took effect at once. A few days before Bad Man Smith had been an outlaw in Black Bar.

He was now the boss ruler of the place.

The gamblers carried a high hand. A carousal was held in the barroom of the Kearns Hotel.

There were a number of shooting scrapes, Smith himself taking a hand in one.

Matters went from bad to worse. The better class of miners saw their mistake at once.

Lawlessness became rampant in the town.

No honest man's life was safe. Thus matters went on for several days.

In this time Smith had not deigned to heed Dixey or the detectives; but, as they afterward discovered, they had been under the closest surveillance.

If they had attempted to leave town they would have been stopped. They were prisoners without knowing it.

The revengeful spirit of Smith had no idea of permitting the three foes he so hated to escape.

He was simply waiting before closing his fangs upon them, just as a cat plays with a mouse.

One evening Smith appeared in the barroom of the hotel.

Sam Clark was now his right-hand man. Smith was in a surly frame of mind.

Dixey and the Bradys were seated at a table in the far end of the room.

Smith fixed his sullen gaze upon them. Then he turned to Clark.

"Arrest those cusses, an' take 'em to ther lock-up."

Clark snapped his fingers and half a dozen deputies, armed to the teeth, joined him.

Dixey's face was hard and set. The issue he had feared was at hand.

"If we yield he will hang us like fools," said Dixey. "Shall we sell our lives, friends?"

The detectives saw that the situation was a serious one.

Of course they could fight and shoot down a number of the foe before being shot themselves.

This, however, was only accepting certain death.

Arrest and imprisonment, however, was not death, at least not of the immediate kind.

So the shrewd detective said:

"Wait! Temporize a little. There will be time to fight later."

So, as the deputies approached, Old King Brady raised his voice and said:

"Upon what charge do you arrest us?"

"We are instructed by the sheriff to throw ye into the lock-up," said Clark. "That's all."

"By what right?"

"I'll tell ye!" thundered Smith. "Ye're working ag'in the government of this town, and the public peace an' safety demands that ye be made an example of. I've got a court to try ye by, an' if ye're found guilty ye'll hang for it."

"Shall we have a fair trial?"

"As fair as ye deserve."

"Look here, Smith," said Old King Brady, quietly. "You're not a fool, and I think you will at once see the folly of defying the law of the United States. If you harm us you will pay dearly for it."

At the same moment the old detective showed his star.

Smith started back.

"The deuce!" he ejaculated. "You are a Secret Service man."

"Yes, I am."

The villain's face lit up.

"I see the point," he cried. "You are the detectives from New York who have come here to get a case against me."

Dixey gave a gasp of astonishment. He also stared at the Bradys.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "Is that so, gents?"

Old King Brady bowed.

"It is the truth," he said. "We are New York detectives."

Dixey rubbed his eyes. The crowd was startled.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I was thick-headed not to guess that before; and to think that I didn't know you down to Denver."

"It is not to be wondered at," said Harry, with a laugh. "We were strangers to you."

Dixey was dazed with the force of the revelation.

But a hard, cruel smile lurked about the corners of Smith's mouth. He folded his arms.

"So your are really the chaps who came here from New York to get a case ag'in Herman Smith," he said, sarcastically. "Well, you made a big success of it."

"Yes, we did," said Old King Brady. "We have evidence enough against you now to hang you."

Never in his life had the old detective played a harder bluff.

CHAPTER XII.

A CLEVER BLUFF.

Smith shrugged his huge shoulders.

"I dare say you will try and do it," he said.

"We shall turn you over to the law."

"You will?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Now!"

Old King Brady drew forth a pair of handcuffs. The bluff was so cool and colossal that even Bad Man Smith himself was startled.

"You are my prisoner," said the old detective. "The Secret Service wants you for various crimes."

Smith's face flushed with cholerick anger.

"This is all very fine," he gritted, "but it won't work, my friends. You are my prisoners. You are not in New York, but in Black Bar, Colorado. I am the maker of laws here, and I enforce them, too. I am the boss just now, and if any man here wants to dispute it, let him step forward." —

Old King Brady stepped boldly forward.

"I dispute it," he said, coolly, "in the name of humanity and the law. You are an impostor and a cut-throat, and these very men who are back of you have been hoodwinked. They will discover their mistake. Yes, I dispute your right to dictate to the law in this town, and I arrest you on the charge of murder."

A frightful curse escaped Smith's lips. His face was black with fearful passion.

He reached for his revolver. He was a quick shot, but Old King Brady was quicker.

His own pistol stared the bad man in the face.

"Steady! An inch further and you die on the spot," he cried.

It was a desperate game the old detective was playing; but it was a desperate case, and needed a desperate remedy.

Smith for a second time was held at bay by this intrepid old detective from New York.

White and trembling with suppressed fury he yelled:

"Seize him, men! Drag him out and hang him!"

"Make a move to lay a hand on me and Smith is a dead man," thundered the old detective.

The deputies halted. It was certain that the detective meant what he said.

The situation was an exciting one, as well as an odd one.

Not a man in the crowd dared move. Even Smith himself was utterly helpless. The old detective's revolver was the key to the situation.

"Call your dogs off, Smith, or you die," gritted the old detective. "The slightest pressure on the trigger of this pistol sends you instantly down to hell."

Smith's face began to grow ghastly. There was a light in the old detective's eyes which cowed him.

"All right, boys," said Smith, tensely. "He's got the drop, but it's only for now."

"Is it?" said Old King Brady, in a hard voice. "You contemptible cur! I've a mind to rid the world of you now. I don't know what holds me back! Now, you must promise us safe passage out of this town. We will return later, I promise you. Give me your word of honor or you die this moment. Quick!"

The revolver muzzle was nearing the villain's eye. He was pale as death.

For a moment he struggled with himself. Discretion won the battle for him.

"All right," he agreed. "You have my word; but if ye ever show up here ag'in Herman Smith will flay ye alive."

Old King Brady lowered his revolver.

The game was won.

The splendid nerve and daring of the old detective had done it. There was no going back on the word.

For Smith to have played the traitor now, after giving his oath, would have turned the sentiment of his own men against him, so strict was the sense of honor in the miner.

"Curse ye!" he yelled. "Ye shall pay for this. I'll hunt ye to the end of the earth. Ye escape for now, but my turn is coming."

"That's all right," said Old King Brady, quietly. "It all depends on who gets the drop first."

Instinctively Smith's hand went toward his revolver; but there was an ominous roar in the crowd. He checked himself.

"An' you, Dan Dixey!" he gritted. "You air the cause of all this trouble. I'll meet you ag'in."

"Not if I meet you first," said Dixey, facetiously, for he was in good spirits over the result of Old King Brady's coup-de-main. "We have safe passage out of the town, you know."

"Yes, and be sure we shall return," said Harry.

Smith was purple with fury, but he was unable to do the trio any harm.

"If you return, nothing will save ye!" he cried.

Then he turned on his heel and left the place. The crowd gathered closer about.

Words of commendation came even from Smith's own gang.

"Ye've got sand, old man."

"Ye backed the bad man down in great style."

"We like yer pluck!"

"Gentlemen," said Old King Brady, "we are about to leave the town. When we return you will be prepared for a new regime. You will soon find that Smith is not the sort of man to give you good government. You must have law and order to be successful."

"Yes; but if law an' order stops our sport——"

"It will not stop innocent sport. Only vicious forms of sport will come under the head of the law."

There was a murmur in the crowd. The detectives and Dixey walked out into the street.

They knew that there was no time to lose. They must get out of the town at once to ensure their safety.

It was an easy matter to procure mustangs, which they mounted and rode away.

Dixey said briefly:

"I own a mining shaft up in the hills where we can find a safe hiding place. Perhaps we had better go there for a while."

"But what about provisions?" asked Harry.

"I have a cache well stocked," said Dixey. "We can live there safely a long while; but I anticipate a short rule for Smith in Black Bar. He will inaugurate a rule which will surely result in a revolution."

"That is right," agreed Old King Brady. "And that will be our opportunity to step in."

"To be sure!"

Dixey did not tire of alluding to Old King Brady's pluck and ready wit in getting the drop on Smith.

"Oh, he had to keep his word," declared Dixey. "Miners won't stand for treachery; but everybody fears Smith so much that few would have dared to do what you did."

"It was a case of do or die," said the old detective, modestly. "I am thankful that the game worked."

"We would have been dead men by this time if it hadn't," declared Harry.

"That is right."

It was past midnight when they reached the old mining shaft; but in a log shanty there Dixey had bedding and provisions stored away.

A fire was made, and soon the whole party was comfortable for the night.

They were tired and did not wait to discuss the events of the day, but turned in and went to sleep.

The next morning they were astir early, and Dixey opened his cache and found some provisions.

A palatable breakfast was prepared.

"Now," said the deposed sheriff of Black Bar, "what is the order of the day? Will we dare to go down into Black Bar?"

"Most assuredly," declared Old King Brady.

"There is no better plan," said Harry.

"But—the risk," stammered Dixey. "Is it safe?"

"Not to go there openly; but we have some clever disguises."

"Good!" cried Dixey. "That did not occur to me; but what shall I do? I can only remain here."

"We will fix you up all right," said Old King Brady. "We have a disguise for you."

Dixey was delighted with the plan. To him it promised much.

The detectives quickly made up the disguises. So clever were they that Dixey was amazed.

"You New York detectives beat the world," he declared. "I don't believe my own mother would know me."

"Well," cried Harry, "let us be off. There is good work for us down in Black Bar."

"So there is."

The trio at once set out down the mountain side.

They approached the mining town with due caution.

From the mountain side they had a good view of the main street of the town.

It could be seen that something unusual was going on there.

A great crowd was gathered before the door of the hotel.

"Hello!" exclaimed Dixey. "Something is up. What can it be?"

"There is certainly something going on," agreed Old King Brady. "I wonder what?"

For a time they studied the scene. Then the old detective set out rapidly down the mountain.

"Let us go down and see about it," he cried. "Perhaps there has already been a turning of the tide against Smith."

Imbued with hope, the little party sped on.

In a short while they were in the streets of the little mining town.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OVERTHROW OF SMITH.

Nobody seemed to penetrate their disguises, and they rushed on without caution.

As they drew near the hotel they at once saw the reason for the congregation of miners.

For many days there had been little work in the mines.

Since the accession of Smith as the local ruler, a lawless spirit of recklessness and dissipation had asserted itself.

Men who had hitherto been honest plodders with pan and pick were now drifting toward that state of being which makes outlaws of men.

The crowd in front of Kearns' hotel was an excited one.

At times they broke into derisive cheers.

Then there were hisses and cat-calls. As the detectives drew near they recognized the cause of it all.

A woman's figure was prominent on the platform of the hotel.

She presented a strange spectacle. Her gown was torn and mud-bedaubed.

Her features were spotted with bits of mud, and cakes of it adhered to the side wall of the building.

Even as the detectives gazed some small pieces of clay came hurling through the air and struck her in the face.

It was Gospel Sally.

In spite of the jeers and hisses, in spite of the shower of mud missiles, she stood bravely before them, like a lioness at bay.

Her face showed the intensity of her emotions as she raised her hands prophetically and cried:

"Sodom and Gomorrah had their day and their punish-

ment. You will be visited in the same way by the wrath of a just God.

"So long as Herman Smith holds rule in Black Bar there can be no help for you. He is inspired by the devil. If there are any good men and true among you, now is the time for you to assert your manhood. Rise and overthrow this monster. Down with the crime-stained wretch, the black murderer of men——"

A wild uproar of disapproval drowned her voice.

The rough miners surged nearer, and shouts went up:

"Git down thar, old woman."

"Go back to yer knitting-work."

"You can't make that go!"

It was Smith's henchmen who were doing all this shouting.

The detectives noted that many of the miners, it seemed to them the majority, were silent.

The Bradys were aghast at the hardihood of Gospel Sally. Surely she was brave as a lioness.

There was not a trace of fear in her face, as the rough crew surged upon her angrily.

Instead she hurled defiance at them.

"Oh, throw all the mud at me you choose!" she cried.

"You are cowards, all. You know that you are wrong and I am right. I defy you. Cowards, to attack a helpless woman. Kill me if you wish, but I will speak my mind. Black Bar can never be a fit place to live in till Herman Smith is hanged to some tree on yonder mountainside."

This declaration caused a hoarse bellow of rage from one of the crowd.

A man strode forward and yelled:

"Come down out of thar, ye hussy! Woman or no woman, ye can't defy me in that way."

It was Bad Man Smith.

But Gospel Sally's face lit up with fresh inspiration.

She leaned forward and hurled anathemas at Smith. For a moment he quailed.

Then rage got the best of him.

He spoke to a number of his companions. Instantly they sprang upon the platform.

"You are under arrest."

"Put her in the lock-up!" yelled Smith. "That's the place for her!"

Gospel Sally resisted as far as her strength would allow.

But she was dragged from the platform and down into the crowd. All this created the most intense excitement.

Dixey was much excited. But the Bradys were cool.

"Wait a while," said Old King Brady. "They have not harmed her yet."

Already, though, there was a perceptible disapproval of this course of Smith's in the crowd.

It was possible that no objection would have been offered if the bad man and his henchmen had sought simply to put the woman in the lock-up.

This was a small, windowless cabin of logs near the hotel.

But the word was passed around among the ruffians:

"Make an end of her!"

"String her up!"

Instantly Gospel Sally was hustled through the crowd, and a rope was produced.

Then the climax was reached.

One of the miners, Big Joe Burns by name, shouted:

"Hold on! Thar's goin' to be no hangin' of women in Black Bar!"

"That's right!" chorused a hundred voices.

Smith turned with black face, trying to single out the first speaker.

"Who said that?" he demanded, hotly.

"I did!" cried Burns. "An' I'm not the only one that says it."

Dixey was boiling over, but the Bradys restrained him.

"Not yet," said Old King Brady. "Things are working our way."

Smith's lurid gaze was fixed upon Burns.

Suddenly, and without a warning, a pistol flashed in the Bad Man's hand.

Crack!

A hoarse cry of pain leaped from the big miner's lips. He placed a hand to his head, blood spurted from his right eye, and he fell forward in the throes of death.

"Who's the next man?" yelled Smith. "Curse ye! Who's the next one! I'm the boss of this town!"

For a moment the crowd was stupefied. Some were awed by the audacity of Smith's act.

They stood inactive.

A few went to the dying man's assistance.

"Take that hussy to the nearest tree an' hang her!" roared Smith. "Any man or woman who tries to disturb the peace of this town will be dealt with in the same way!"

But even the villain's own gang hesitated.

A thrill rang through the crowd. It was the moment to act.

"Come on!" said Old King Brady.

The old detective sprang forward with a couple of revolvers in his hands.

He cried loudly:

"Unhand that woman! There's not a man in Black Bar who has the soul of a man will see you hang her!"

Smith's face was livid. He half raised his revolver to shoot this new champion.

But something in Old King Brady's eye held him.

"Who are you?" he hissed.

"I am a man," replied the old detective. "And you are a cur."

"Curse you—die!"

"Hold!"

Harry thrust a revolver into the villain's ear.

"Drop your pistols!"

Smith quivered like a leaf. There was no move in the crowd to aid him. It was a suspenseful moment.

The detectives were not sure that the tide would turn their way. Crowds are ruled by caprice.

But if nothing was said for the championship of the defenseless woman, nothing was said against it.

Luckily the Bradys were not recognized in their disguise.

The antipathy to the Eastern detectives therefore was not present. Smith was wrong, as every man in the crowd knew.

Even their loyalty to him could not stand against his present course.

He saw this, but yet was insanely anxious to carry his point. So he cried:

"Where are ye, men! Curse ye, shoot the dogs!"

"If any man fires at me, I'll shoot you," declared Harry, sternly. "Drop your pistols!"

Smith, with a curse, obeyed.

The crowd looked sullenly on.

Old King Brady now turned to the men who held Gospel Sally.

"Release her!" he said.

This was done. The gang fell back, for a murmur was going through the crowd.

And now, Dixey, unable to longer hold in, began to harangue the crowd.

"Men of Black Bar!" he shouted, "murder has been committed right here before your eyes, by this black-hearted wretch whom you choose to call your sheriff.

"What is better for you? Such a rule by such a man, where no man's life is safe, or a clean government by honest men? Will you stand this longer? I call upon every honest miner to open his eyes and see what has been done. Let it not be said that Black Bar is the devil's den in Colorado. Let us have fair rule and fair play."

A great wave of excitement surged over the crowd.

Dixey's words were electrical in their effect.

A shout went up.

"Fair rule and fair play!"

"Let's have honest government. No murder for Black Bar!"

Like a tidal wave the change in sentiment swept over the crowd. There was no stemming it.

Cheer after cheer went up.

Smith was deserted by even his own gang.

These, fearful of sharing his fate, slunk away instantly. Dixey and Gospel Sally addressed the crowd. The overthrow of Bad Man Smith seemed complete.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TURNING OF TABLES.

Harry had held the revolver against the villain's temple. Old King Brady now seized the opportunity to slip handcuffs on Smith.

"You see, my friend," said the old detective; "your reign was a brief one after all."

Smith's face was purple.

"Detectives!" he gritted.

"Yes!" said Old King Brady. "You didn't know us, did you?"

"Curse you! I ought to have hung you when I had you in my power."

"But you didn't."

"What are you going to do with me?"

"Take you up to Denver for a fair trial."

Smith was ashy pale.

"For God's sake be fair!" he gasped. "Don't send me to death. I gave you a chance to get away. Now give me a chance."

"Did you?" said Old King Brady. "You gave us a chance perforce. You could not help yourself."

Smith was limp as a rag. All his bravado seemed to have gone. He begged and pleaded for his freedom.

"It is our duty to give you up to the law," they said. "We have no other course."

No objection was made by the crowd when the detective took Smith to a room in the hotel and held him under guard.

Their intention was to take him to Denver by the next stage.

Then their case would be ended.

Dixey was once more wholly in control of things at the Bar. The miners were not likely to listen again to a change.

The murder, so cold-blooded, of Joe Burns, had caused a complete revulsion of sentiment.

In this extremity the Bad Man seemed not to have a friend.

Dixey was the happiest man in Black Bar.

He overwhelmed the detectives with expressions of gratitude.

"You shall be well rewarded," he declared. "The future of this town is assured. The one evil has been removed."

"We have done very little," said Old King Brady.

"You have done all. Without you I could have accomplished little."

When the stage came in that night Jeff Bloom strode into the hotel and asked for the Bradys.

He had a letter, postmarked at Denver.

Thus it read:

"To the Bradys, detectives—Dick Moran has turned State's evidence against Herman Smith and his gang at Black Bar. If you have got your man Moran will be a valuable witness for you. All Denver is hoping that you will be successful. Don't let the bad man get the drop on you.

"Hunter Williams, Attorney-at-law."

"In that case," said Old King Brady, "it will hardly be necessary to take witnesses from here. So we will go alone with the prisoner."

The next morning the detectives placed their prisoner in the Denver stage.

The whole town turned out to see Smith's farewell to Black Bar.

As the stage rolled out of the town cheers for the detectives were given and hisses for Bad Man Smith.

But the bad man seemed to have in some wonderful way regained his nerve.

He was as cool and self-possessed as could be.

A curious, complacent light shone in his black eyes. The detectives noted this.

Jeff Bloom drove the stage through the mountain canyons in his best fashion.

He told stories to the passengers, sang songs, and cracked his whip with much gusto.

Besides the detectives and their prisoners there were four miners on their way home from a season of gold hunting.

It was past the hour of noon when the stage was lumbering in the heat through a dusty patch of sage brush.

Suddenly Bloom shouted to his steaming horses and they came to a stop.

The detectives instinctively looked out of the stage window to see what was the matter.

They saw it at once.

From behind a wall of bowlders half a dozen men had appeared. They covered the coach with their revolvers.

"No use, gents!" yelled Bloom. "It's Black Dick. He'll have to relieve ye of some of your dust."

Old King Brady acted quickly. To the miners on the coach as he leaped out he shouted:

"Come down here, men. There's enough of us to stand them off."

"No, thar ain't."

The old detective was astonished to see that the four miners had him covered with their revolvers.

"Easy meat!" cried one of them. "Ye thought ye had Smith, didn't ye? But it looks as if Smith had ye!"

The Bradys were brave men, but not foolhardy.

They saw that they were trapped.

Chagrin most intense seized upon them. They wondered why they had not regarded the four passengers more closely on leaving Black Bar.

It was easy now to understand the nonchalance and change of spirit on Smith's part.

He had been certain of rescue from the start.

His face was a picture of fiendish triumph and malevolent delight.

"Here, Clark," he shouted, "come here an' take these irons off my wrists. It's my inning now, and I promise ye these chaps don't score again."

In that moment the two detectives saw that death was close upon them.

They knew the disposition of Herman Smith well enough to be sure that he would show them no mercy.

Therefore they asked for none. They simply stood still and allowed their captors to pinion their hands behind their backs.

Clark found the key of the handcuffs in Harry's pocket, and set Smith free.

The bad man quivered with rage and hate as he faced his prisoners.

For a moment he seemed about to throw himself upon them.

"Ah, ye miserable pups!" he hissed. "Things have turned my way this time. Curse ye, I've a mind to gouge yer eyes out!"

He continued to vilify and curse them for a long while. He spat in their faces and kicked them.

The Bradys submitted to all these indignities stoically.

Smith drew a keen-edged knife from Clark's belt.

He felt the edge with devilish calculation.

Then he pressed the point against Old King Brady's throat. A tiny jet of blood spurted forth.

The villain glared into the old detective's eyes, looking for a sign of weakening.

But it did not come.

Calm and cool and fearless the old detective looked the bad man square in the eye.

For one moment Smith hesitated. One thrust of that blade and the old detective's career would be ended forever.

But it did not come.

Smith drew a deep breath, and a light of cunning exultation shone in his eyes.

"No!" he said; "I'll not let ye off so easy. That's jest what ye want. It would be an easy death. I don't mean that ye shall die so easy as that."

He returned the knife to Clark.

All this while Jeff Bloom had sat stoically on his box.

Smith now raised his hand and said:

"Go on, Bloom. Ye needn't say anything about this at Denver."

Bloom picked up the reins, and the coach rattled away.

Smith shook hands with Black Dick and said:

"We'll get the upper hand down there at Black Bar yet. First I'll deal with these chaps."

The detectives were now blindfolded and led away. For a long way they were led over rough ground and through chaparral.

Then they became conscious of the fact that they were in a cavern. Rough hands tore the bandages from their eyes.

They were in a high-arched cavern.

A narrow path led from it along the mountain wall.

Far below the valleys could be seen, and even the main street of Black Bar was visible.

At this point the mountainside formed a precipice fully a thousand feet deep.

It was a tremendous steep. The Bradys were led to the edge of this and compelled to look over.

"To-morrow morning," said Smith, with a fiendish chuckle, "you will be allowed to drop down to the bottom of this hole in the earth. In the meantime you shall have the pleasure of reflecting upon the sensation."

In spite of their courage the Bradys shivered.

It was a horrible prospect.

Back into the cavern they were led. They were then bound hand and foot and left in one corner of the place.

In this uncomfortable position they were left for the rest of the day.

At times Smith came up and jeered at them and gave them a kick.

"To-morrow morning at sunrise," he said, cruelly. "In the meantime you may have plenty of time to think it over."

Then night came on.

CHAPTER XV.

THE END.

When the darkness had settled down thickly over the hills, Black Dick's men aroused themselves, for the most of them slept during the day.

At night they went forth upon marauding expeditions.

They prepared for one now under the direction of Black Dick.

Smith, in consultation with the road agent, said, in a tone audible to the detective:

"Well, the prisoners will be all safe here. To-night I'll take a run down to Black Bar and see how things are going."

"All right," agreed Black Dick. "The prisoners can't escape. Even if they were not bound they could never find their way out of here."

"Good! To-morrow we will see them leap into the gorge."

A short while later the villains took their departure.

The Bradys saw that the cavern was almost empty.

The half dozen men left now withdrew to a far part of the cavern and engaged in a game of cards.

The detectives were left alone and unguarded. Naturally the thought of escape came to them.

But they were tightly bound hard and fast.

However, a thought struck Harry.

He felt a jagged edge of rock behind him.

He brought the cords which bound his wrists to bear upon this. He worked the cords back and forth on the jagged stone.

The strands began to snap.

"I believe I can free my hands," he whispered.

"I fear that will do us no good," said Old King Brady. "Probably every path from the cavern is guarded."

"At least we can try."

"Oh, yes. I hope you may succeed."

For a long while Harry worked on the cords.

One after another snapped, until finally he exclaimed:

"It is done."

The young detective had the use of his hands.

The result was that in a few moments he had released the cords about his ankles.

Then he untied Old King Brady's bonds.

They were free.

The question now was how to get out of the cavern safely. If this could be done it would be a great victory.

"We may be able to trap Bad Man Smith after all," declared Harry.

The detectives knew the risk of their undertaking, and were on their guard.

They cautiously moved along the wall of the cavern toward the entrance.

Suddenly the wall came to an end, and Harry put his arm into a deep fissure.

"What is this?" he whispered. "There is some sort of an opening here."

Old King Brady crept forward.

"I think I understand," he said. "I heard them talking about the look-off and saw one of the men pass out this way."

"That is our game, then," said Harry. "No doubt it leads to the outer air."

"Let us see."

The two detectives crept into the fissure.

The next moment they were climbing rough-hewn stairs in the rock. Then the star-lit sky showed above them.

Up they went, until they were soon in the open air.

They could see that they were on a crag of rock high above the valley.

From this point a wide view of the country could be had.

In the daytime one could see an incredible distance.

This was the outlaws' look-off. It was a wide range.

The detectives, however, now were interested only in the possibility of getting down the steep sides of the crag.

They were obliged to move with caution, for there might be a guard below for aught they knew.

They crept about the platform of rock.

Finally Harry found a chance to slide over and catch a spur of rock below.

This he did.

A moment later he found himself in a narrow path which might have been made by mountain goats.

It was no light matter to follow this.

But the detectives succeeded, and finally came to a plateau. Here they waited.

But finally assured that the coast was clear they pushed on.

In the dark it was hard to tell whether they were near a sentry or not.

It was necessary to take some chances. But luck was with them.

After a long climb they reached a path which they followed until they came to a broad stage road.

At last they were on the highway. Their escape was assured.

But as they stood there Harry gripped Old King Brady's arm.

"Listen!" he whispered.

A crunching sound was heard in a clump of mesquite near. Then a gentle whicker of a horse.

"Horses!"

"Yes."

"Let us see if they are guarded."

Very cautiously the Bradys crept into the mesquite. There was light enough for them to see that half a dozen mustangs were tethered there.

They were a part of the outlaws' horses.

But where were the outlaws?

Even as the detectives asked themselves this question a hum of voices was heard.

They came nearer.

Half a dozen figures were outlined against the night sky.

"All right, Jerry," said a voice which they recognized as that of Smith. "You chaps go back on the trail and see if you can find the others. I'll stay here with the ponies."

"All right, Herman."

The five men glided away, leaving the one.

Old King Brady gripped Harry's arm. The same thought had come to both.

They crowded low in the mesquite. Smith whistled softly as he approached the horses.

In another moment he was within two feet of Old King Brady. The old detective quickly swept one arm across the villain's throat.

Not an outcry escaped him as the detectives bore him to the ground.

A gag was slipped into his mouth, his arms were bound. Then Harry slipped the bridle of three of the mustangs.

The prisoner was tied to one. The detectives each mounted one; then they rode off down the trail.

In half an hour they reached level ground and galloped on toward Denver.

Well out on the road, Smith's gag was released. He was dazed to find that he was again the prisoner of the Bradys.

The next day the Bradys rode into Denver and delivered Smith to the authorities. A month later the Bad Man of Black Bar expiated his crimes on the scaffold.

The case was ended.

The Bradys returned to New York and reported to the Chief of the Secret Service.

"I have heard it all," said that worthy. "You have made your everlasting fame in the West."

"If that is the case," cried Harry, "let us make it universal."

Accepting the hint, the chief at once gave them another case, of which we will write at a later day.

THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS AND THE VEILED GIRL; OR, PIPING THE TOMBS MYSTERY," which will be the next number (129) of "Secret Service."

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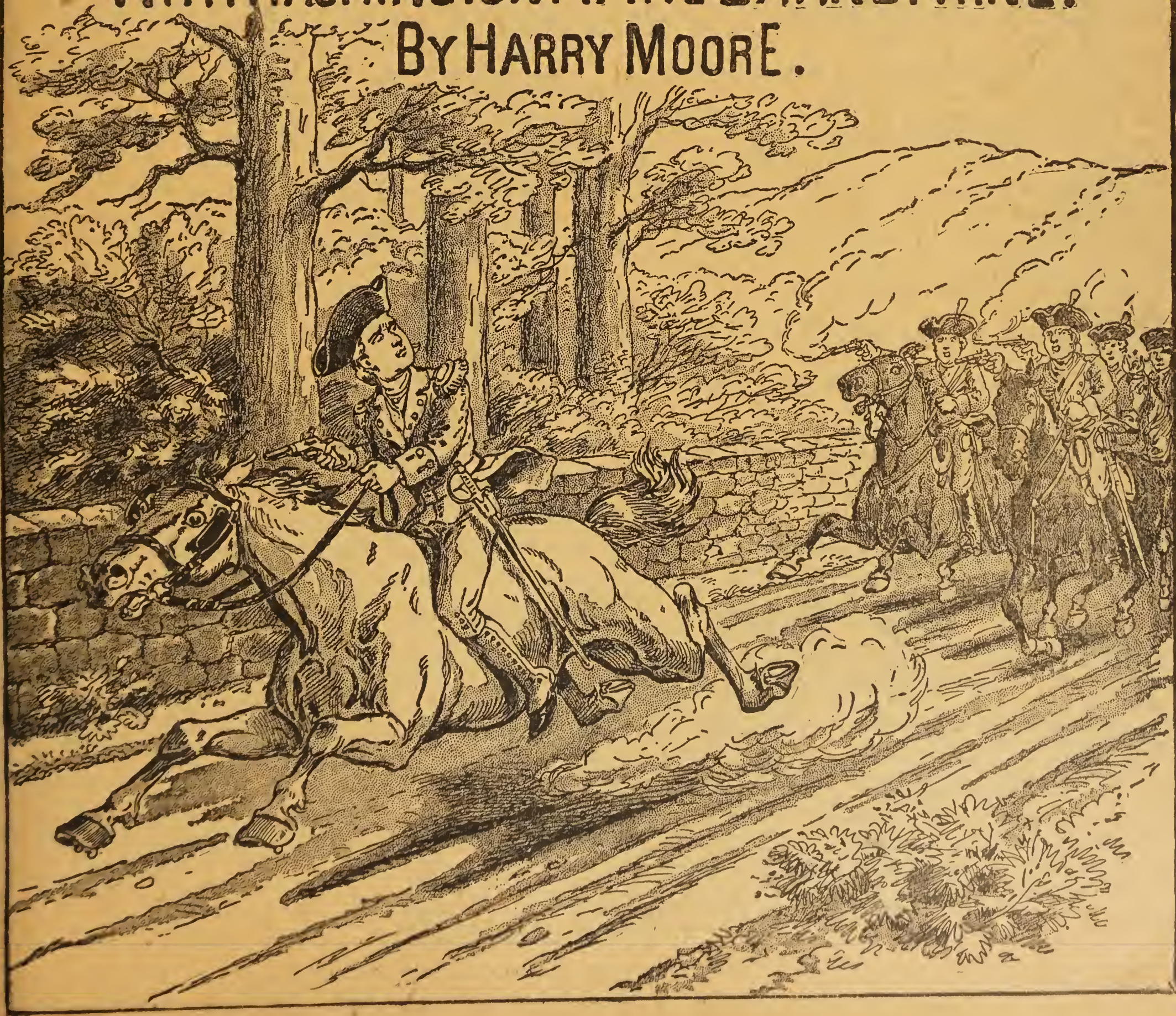
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